# Education, Employment, and Everything
# The triple layers of a woman's life

***Edited by***
***Majella Albion***
***Pauline Collins***

Refereed Proceedings of the International Women's Conference
University of Southern Queensland
Toowoomba, Queensland, Australia
**26-29 September 2007**
Conducted by the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) Women's Network Inc, Young Women's Place Inc, Lifeline Darling Downs and South West Queensland Ltd and the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Service

The conference is a keystone project of the USQ 40th anniversary celebrations

Published by USQ Women's Network Inc
Toowoomba, QLD, Australia

Printed by University of Southern Queensland Printery

ISBN 9781921420009

Copyright © 2007 USQ Women's Network Inc and individual authors

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any means without written permission of the copyright holders.

# Table of Contents

Introduction……ii
Welcome from the Conference Chair……1
Keynote Speakers…….....4
Workshop presentations……...15
Abstracts of non-refereed conference papers …… ……...20
Refereed papers……29

# Introduction

This publication contains an overview of the keynote, sessional and refereed speakers, and workshops presented at the International Women's Conference, *Education, Employment, and Everything – The triple layers of a woman's life,* held at the University of Southern Queensland from 26-29 September, 2007.

Delegates and invited speakers from 12 countries came together to discuss issues relevant to women and to share their stories.

Papers that are published in full in this document were submitted for blind review by 2 members of the review panel, and meet the requirements for a DEST E1 research classification. Apart from minor editorial changes to meet publication standards, the papers are the work of the authors.

The committee acknowledges and appreciates the contribution and commitment of Susie Gibson and Annette Nanka who assisted with formatting, Dorothy Bramston who helped prepare papers for publication, and the reviewing panel, whose names are listed below:

Majella Albion
Ann Alcock
Lorelle Burton
Frances Cassidy
Anne Clair
Pauline Collins
Marilyn Dorman
Ronel Erwee
Andrew Fox
Jill Lawrence
Tony Machin
Gay Mason
Maxine O'Brien
Cheryl Perrin
Janet Rankin
Petrea Redmond
Roslyn Reilly
Janet Roth
Cassandra Star
Janet Taylor
Trudy Yukinovich

# Welcome from the Conference Chair

The USQ Women's Network Inc (WN) held its first meeting in December 1991 and now has around 130 members including staff and students of the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). The Network is uniquely placed, working independently with the university in the interests of women, offering valuable input to the development and implementation of policies that impact on women. The WN has held three very successful conferences bringing together women from the USQ campus and the Toowoomba community. It therefore seemed a natural progression to join with other key groups in the community who represent concerns for various areas of women's lives (Young Women's Place Inc, Lifeline Darling Downs Ltd and Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Service) to bring together an international, national and local gathering of women to expand our understanding of the concerns facing women today and improve our networks in a globally shrinking world.

We are privileged to have Her Excellency, Ms Quentin Bryce, AC, Governor of Queensland, open the conference and address delegates on the issues facing women in entering the workforce, and gaining education and employment in today's world.

USQ Chancellor, Mrs Bobbie Brazil has been a wonderful support to the Conference committee and is speaking to delegates on women doing business and living in regional and remote areas.

A key impetus for this conference was the changing face of the labour market. In Australia the Industrial Relations reforms (known as 'WorkChoices') together with Welfare reforms, have been introduced to address the problems of an ageing workforce and global markets competing for cheap labour.

The industrial relations reforms combined with the Welfare law reform have brought pressure on women, particularly single mothers, to go into the paid workforce, thus increasing the need for education. Education often places a huge financial strain on women, not only in paying for their books and resources but (in Australia) also by incurring a significant HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme) debt that is deducted from later earnings.

A number of the presentations in the conference address the need for women to have support in gaining higher education to enable them to gain greater economic stability in their lives. In many countries it is a luxury beyond the reach of many women. Education leads to employment and advancement of the whole community.

Entering into education at the tertiary level has its own difficulties, with pressures on women to manage their time between children, partners, study, and paid work. Professor Linda Duxbury from the Sprott School of Business, Carleton University in Canada, addresses these concerns, having conducted a study on work-life balance in which 32,800 Canadian employees participated. Her presentation, 'Standing still is NOT an option: Why Australia needs to get serious about work life balance' looks at new ways that women are working in the increasingly competitive and pressured global environment. Professor Duxbury addresses the adoption of flexible practices that support women as they progress through various life stages from youth, to mothers, carers, and older women, reflecting her interest in studying the changing working environment.

Many women in the Western world are facing uncertain futures through family breakdown, including the loss of wider family support networks, fewer promotion opportunities than their male counterparts, and significantly reduced superannuation protection. These stresses increase personal conflict and women are often the victims of violent outcomes. Speakers such as Senator Claire Moore, Margaret Reynolds, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Queensland, and Mayor Di Thorley address these concerns.

All these women hold political positions of influence. Claire has been a Senator for Qld since 2001. Before that Claire was the Branch Secretary of the Community and Public Service Union from 1994. Her enthusiastic commitment to working for others is reflected in her background in unions, activism in justice and community groups, and overseas development projects. Claire brings this wealth of

experience to the conference addressing delegates on the issue of what politicians can do for women and what the immediate future may hold. Margaret Reynolds was also a Senator in the Australian Parliament from 1983-1999, including three years as Minister for the Status of Women and Minister for Local Government and Regional Development. She is a long-term advocate for human rights and social justice having been an activist in the Australian Women's Movement for over thirty years and will publish her political memoir, *Living Politics,* in October with University of Queensland Press.

Mayor Di Thorley served as Councillor from 1997 to 1999 and became Mayor of Toowoomba in 2000. She is passionate about social issues, especially those that affect youth and she has been a strong voice and role model for regional women in business and local government. All of these women understand the pressures of maintaining triple layered lives as mothers, carers, partners, and paid workers. These pressures leave little time for women to nourish their inner life and find time for balance, often leading to situations of conflict.

Much of this uncertainty is occurring in a world going through fundamental changes leading to increased national conflicts in which women and children suffer the most. Ways to help women recover from the violence of war, and the need to avoid conflict escalating into violence is a concern of the conference and are addressed by speakers such as Aziza Parwani, Programs Manager for Save the Children (USA) in the Afghanistan Field Office, Kabul; Zainab Wahidi, Lecturer of Kabul University and current deputy Program Manager of Humanitarian assistance for the Women of Afghanistan (HAWA) a program of CARE International in Afghanistan; and Robyn Gaspari, Managing Director of Gaspari Consultants Pty Ltd, operating as Conflict Resolution Management and Training Services.

Aziza Parwani was appointed as a 2007 Global Leader for Young Children and participated in the 2007 World Forum. Aziza is committed to improving the lives and wellbeing of her people and as such she was selected as one of the women in the Afghan Women's Role Model Calendar in 2005-2006. Aziza has experienced the violence of war from all sides. As a refugee in 1995 she worked with Save the Children (US) with both the refugee program in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. Aziza's current concerns for women focus on the 'employment, education and everything' of Afghan women and her topic addresses the issue of 'Women – can they recover from war?'

Likewise, Zainab Wahidi has experienced the full impact of war. Zainab's desire is to see freedom for the people of Afghanistan and the empowering of women to participate freely and fully in the decision making process within family and society. Zainab, unfortunately, is still suffering the daily restrictions and limitations of living in a war torn country, being prevented from being with us in person due to being refused a visa to attend. Zainab joins the conference, thanks to technology, which is far in advance of peaceful political development in her native country.

Robyn Gaspari is the President and Executive Officer of the Australian Women's Coalition (AWC), a consortium of twenty Women's National Non-Government Organisations who work together to advocate for improvement and advise the Federal Office of the Status of Women on the need for policy changes to improve the status of women in Australia. Robyn Gaspari has travelled widely, talking to women from around the world on all matters concerning conflict ranging from resolution, negotiation and mediation, problem-solving, decision making strategies to team building techniques. One of her key interests is in how education alleviates violence. Robyn's presentation addresses 'how to deal with conflict from a women's perspective'.

Justice Yvonne Mokgoro, who was born in South Africa in Galeshewe Township near Kimberley provides us with a role model of a woman who has managed to achieve in her chosen field despite the oppression of her people. Yvonne brings us a wealth of knowledge as a Justice of the South African Constitutional Court since October 1994; and the current Chairperson of the South African Law (Reform) Commission. She is President of Africa Legal Aid, a non-governmental organisation, which provides legal aid and human rights education throughout Africa and is based in Accra, Ghana with satellite offices in Maastricht (Netherlands) and Johannesburg (South Africa). Justice Mokgoro will speak at the conference dinner on 'the legal position of women in the world today with specific reference to Africa and the legal reforms needed'.

Significantly women in third world countries and Indigenous women suffer added difficulties with poverty and cultural breakdown under colonisation and now globalisation. Lillian Holt, Honorary Fellow of the University of Melbourne and Dr Kaye Price, Lecturer in the School of Education and

Community Studies at the University of Canberra are both important Indigenous Australian women speaking from their cultural perspectives. Lillian was born on Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement in Queensland and was amongst the first wave of Aboriginal university graduates. Lillian's passionate desire for healing of race relations in Australia was acknowledged in 2004 when she was awarded the Gandhi/King/Ikeda Peace Prize by Morehouse College in the United States for her work in peace and reconciliation. Lillian's keynote address 'WORK: Dreams and Drudgery; Visions, Tasks and Hope' is an Indigenous woman's vision of women in the workplace today.

Dr Kaye Price has a primary concern with Indigenous education being the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre's nominee to the National Aboriginal Education Committee. Kaye is currently a member (and immediate past Chair) of the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body. Kaye cites the inclusion of Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies within the nation's key learning areas as a significant achievement. As 2007 ACT Senior Australian of the Year; 2006 ACT NAIDOC Scholar of the Year ; and National Indigenous Scholar in 2004, Kaye brings a wealth of knowledge to us as a woman of wisdom.

A conference on issues facing women in the 21st Century cannot pass without considering the 'everything' aspects of our lives and key in this is women's health. Kerry Ungerer, Acting Director of the Queensland Office for Women is passionate about primary health care and in particular about woman-centred models of maternity care. Kerry has also worked as a consultant to numerous national health associations including the Rural Doctors Association of Australia; the Australian Association of Pathology Practices; Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association; Aged Care Association of Australia, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons and the NZ Association of Pathology Practices, providing research and advice on submissions to a range of inquiries and reviews. Kerry brings to her presentation an overview of where women have been, are now and would like to be in regards to the many layers of their lives.

The Women's Network vision of increasing and improving opportunities, networking and awareness of women's issues not only within the tertiary education sector but also engaging members of our world wide communities and to encourage leadership, development and advancement of women in our local communities globally is being undertaken through the staging of this conference. The opportunity for women from academic, community and all walks of life to meet, have fun, develop and support one another is an essential part of the process of caring for our inner self and nurturing a vision for a better future:

As Committee Chair I would like to acknowledge the 'good women' who have bought this conference about through their voluntary dedication of time and labour in their desire to support other women and bring us all together.

Majella Albion
Ann Alcock
Di Auchetti
Frances Cassidy
Patricia Cretchley
Mabbie Elson
Darlene Garvey
Rebecca Manteit
Fiona Margetts
Gay Mason
Annette Nanka
Lynnette Pirie
Farida Rasif
Allie Stapleton

*Pauline Collins*

Chair Conference Committee

# Keynote Speakers

## Linda Duxbury

### *Standing still is NOT an option: Why Australia needs to get serious about work life balance*

Linda Duxbury is a Professor at the Sprott School of Business, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

She received a MASc in Chemical Engineering and a PhD in Management Sciences from the University of Waterloo. Within the past decade she has completed major studies on balancing work and family in the public, private sectors and not for profit sectors; HR and work-family issues in the small business sector; management support (What is it and Why does it Matter?); career development in the public sector and in the high tech sector; and generational differences in work values.

Linda has also (and is currently) conducting research which evaluates the organisational and individual impacts of email, portable offices, cellular telephones, telework, flexible work arrangements, shift-work, regular part-time work and on-site day care programs, change management and studying what makes a 'supportive' manager. She has recently completed a major and follow-up study on work life balance in which 32,800 Canadian employees participated.

Linda has published widely in both the academic and practitioner literatures in the area of work-family conflict, change management, supportive work environments, stress, telework, the use and impact of office technology, managing the new workforce and supportive management. She has also given over 300 plenary talks on these issues to both public and private sector audiences.

## Robyn Gaspari

### *How to deal with conflict from a woman's perspective*

Robyn Gaspari, Managing Director of Gaspari Consultants Pty Ltd operating as Conflict Resolution Management and Training Services, has personally conducted the majority of more than 300 public seminars. Robyn has trained, facilitated sessions or given lectures to in excess of 30,000 people in every State in Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and India.

In addition, Robyn has individually designed and customised in-house courses in conflict resolution, grievance handling, change management, negotiation and mediation, problem-solving, decision making strategies and team building techniques for corporate organisations, local, state and federal government, government authorities, educators and community organisations.

Robyn is a member and past Governor of District 24 of Zonta International, a service organisation with a charter to improve the status of women worldwide. In 1998-2000 Robyn was the International Consultant for Conflict Resolution and as part of that role was responsible for assessing the viability, replicability and self-sustainability of applications for educative grants designed to eradicate violence against women and children worldwide.

Robyn is currently the President and Executive Officer of the Australian Women's Coalition (AWC), a consortium of twenty Women's National Non-Government Organisations (NGO) who work together to advocate for change and advise the Federal Office of the Status of Women of the need for policy changes in existing and emerging needs to improve the status of women in Australia.

Robyn was selected as one of the two NGO advisers to the Australian Government Delegation to the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women held in New York from March 1-12 2004. Robyn's role was to work with the official delegation as an adviser and a member of the delegation while at the same time to liaise with NGO representatives from around the world.

Robyn is a member of Rotary International and currently holds the role as President of her club and District Training Coordinator and District Secretary.

## Lillian Holt

### *Work: Dreams and drudgery, visions, tasks and hope*

Lillian Holt was the Vice-Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne from 2003-2005 and is now an Honorary Fellow of the University. Formerly, she was the Director, of the University's Centre for Indigenous Education.

Lillian was born on Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement in Queensland. She was in the first wave of Aboriginal graduates and subsequently has worked in Aboriginal education for the past thirty years. She has a BA with majors in English and Journalism (University of Queensland) and an MA from the University of Northern Colorado, USA. Currently, Lillian is enrolled in a PhD at Melbourne University.

Lillian has travelled extensively, both within Australia and overseas and has also spoken at a diverse range of conferences, nationally and internationally.

In 2004 she was awarded a Gandhi/King/Ikeda Peace Prize by Morehouse College in the United States for her work in peace and reconciliation and was also named in the top ten finalists of *The Bulletin* magazine's Smart 100 society section.

Lillian is passionately interested in the healing of race relations in Australia.

## Yvonne Mokgoro

### *"The legal position of women in the world today with specific reference to Africa: legal reforms needed"*

Yvonne Mokgoro was born in South Africa in Galeshewe Township near Kimberley and matriculated at the local St Boniface High School in 1970. She obtained the B.luris degree at the University of the North West in 1982, the LLB degree two years later, and completed her LLM in 1987. She also attended the University of Pennsylvania in the USA, where she was awarded a LLM degree.

A Justice of the Constitutional Court since October 1994, Yvonne is the current Chairperson of the South African Law (Reform) Commission. She has served on the Advisory Committee of the South African – Canadian Linkage Project, from its inception in 1994 until it ceased operations in 2004. She is President of Africa Legal Aid, a non-governmental organisation which provides legal aid and human rights education throughout Africa. Africa Legal Aid is based in Accra, Ghana with satellite offices in Maastricht (Netherlands) and Johannesburg (South Africa).

Yvonne currently serves on a number of boards, university councils and trusts, including the Boards of the Nelson Mandela-Rhodes Trust, the Child Law Centre and the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, the University of the North Student Financial Aid Trust, and is Chairperson of Venda University Council.

She is Honorary Professor of Law at the University of the North, University of the Western Cape, University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, and the University of South Africa. She has been conferred with the Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) by the University of North West, University of Natal, University of Pretoria and the University of Toledo (Ohio) USA.

## Claire Moore

### *What are the politicians doing for women and what does the immediate future hold?*

Claire was born in Toowoomba and received her secondary schooling at St Saviour's College in Toowoomba. She studied a Bachelor of Arts and History at both the University of Queensland and the University of Southern Queensland before starting work with the Commonwealth Public Service.

Claire worked in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs for 12 months before transferring to the Department of Social Services (DSS). Her work for DSS included a three year stint from 1990-1993 based in Townsville.

In 1994, Claire was elected the Branch Secretary of the Community and Public Service Union, a position she held until elected to the Senate in 2001. Claire took her position as a Senator for Queensland on 1 July 2002.

Following in the footsteps of her mother, Claire has always played an active role in community groups such as Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTAR). She was a founding member of both the Australian Workers Heritage Centre and Emily's List. Claire has been a member of Friends of ABC since 1988 and is a member of the Australian Republican Movement and the Australian Coalition for Economic Justice.

Claire is a proud unionist whose activism extended beyond her Secretaryship of the CPSU. From 1996-2001 she was Vice-President, Chair of the Women's Committee, and Chair of the Arts Committee of the Queensland Council of Unions. Claire is also a keen member and supporter for APHEDA, the trade union overseas aid program.

Claire's interests are women's history, particularly in trade unions and the Australian Labour Party, coffee, cricket, art galleries, Australian and Irish folk music and detective fiction.

## Aziza Parwani

### *Women – Can they recover from war and violence?*

Aziza Parwani holds the position of Manager Programs, Save the Children (USA) in the Afghanistan Field Office, Kabul.

Aziza has also been appointed as a Global Leader for Young Children in 2007 and will be participating in the 2007 World Forum, an event of the World Forum Foundation.

Aziza holds an MSc (Chemistry) from the Kabul Polytechnic Institute and her earlier years of education were also in Kabul. Selected as one of the women in the Afghan Women's Role Model Calendar in 2005-2006, Aziza is committed to improving the lives and wellbeing of the vast majority of her country, Afghanistan.

In 1995 Aziza and her family became refugees in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province and, after some time, was engaged and trained by Save the Children to participate in a comprehensive Participatory Rapid Appraisal survey of the reproductive health needs of Afghan refugees in the camps around Haripur.

Since that time Aziza has worked with Save the Children (US) with both the refugee program in Pakistan and in Afghanistan following the fall of the Taliban regime.

Fluent in five languages, Aziza has a heart for the current concerns for women in 'employment, education and everything'. Her work centres on the provision of non-formal education, health and life skills for women, early childhood development, basic education and child protection through community mobilization, direct training, coordination, planning and liaison.

Aziza's dream is to enable women through education and wellbeing so they can be actively involved in the direction and development of society in Afghanistan.

# Kaye Price

## *In the Club – But not lomatilutta*

Kaye Price is a lecturer in the School of Education and Community Studies at the University of Canberra in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

A doctoral graduate from the Australian National University, she completed a Masters of Education Studies at the University of South Australia and was awarded a Bachelor of Education from Edith Cowan University. Training as a teacher in Tasmania, Kaye was very much involved as a member of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) and was the TAC's nominee to the National Aboriginal Education Committee.

She has worked in the area of publishing curriculum materials for Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies and is currently a member (and immediate past Chair) of the ACT Indigenous Education Consultative Body. Kaye says that one of the things she has found most rewarding was working on the National Collaborative Curriculum Project to secure Aboriginal Studies and Torres Strait Islander Studies within the nation's key learning areas. She also particularly enjoyed participating in and following up on the What Works Project.

Most recently, Kaye was named the 2007 ACT Senior Australian of the Year; 2006 ACT NAIDOC Scholar of the Year; and was the National Indigenous Scholar in 2004. She has 5 children, 11 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

## Margaret Reynolds

### *Women's rights are human rights – The challenges still facing Australian women*

Margaret Reynolds is a long-term advocate for human rights and social justice having been an activist in the Australian Women's Movement for over thirty years.

Margaret currently holds the position of Executive Officer of the Tasmanian Division of ACROD, Australia's National Industry Association for Disability Services.

Margaret was a Senator in the Australian Parliament from 1983-1999, including three years as Minister for the Status of Women and Minister for Local Government and Regional Development.

A teacher by profession, she has taught at primary and tertiary level and is currently an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Queensland. Margaret is also a member of the Executive of World Federation of United Nations Associations, Vice-President of the United Nations Association Australia Incorporated and Chair of the Screen Tasmania Advisory Board.

She was the Australian Government Representative on the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation from 1991 to 1996 and represented the Australian Parliament at the United Nations General Assembly for three months in 1997.

## Dianne Thorley

### *What supports are available for regional women and incentives for business initiatives?*

Raised in Stanthorpe, Di Thorley trained as a nurse at Royal Brisbane Hospital and spent some time as a governess in Blackall before returning to Stanthorpe where she took up a nursing position at Stanthorpe Hospital.

She married in 1969 and has three children. The following decade saw her pursue a variety of careers and business endeavours throughout Australia.

Di made Toowoomba home in 1986 where she became a hotel cook. She then worked at and owned a number of businesses in the hospitality industry, including her own catering business. The successful craft market she organised is still running.

Di served as Councillor on Toowoomba City Council from 1997 to 1999 and became Mayor of Toowoomba in 2000. She is passionate about social issues, especially those that affect youth. Her interests include reading and gardening.

In recent times Di has become prominent in the debate concerning South East Queensland's water crisis.

## Kerry Ungerer

### *Education, employment and everything – the triple layers of a woman's life: How it used to be, how it is now, and how we would like it to be*

Kerry Ungerer is currently Acting Director of the Queensland Office for Women, where she has worked since September 2005, as Manager of both the Policy and Program Delivery branches. She has a Master of Health Administration degree from the University of New South Wales and spent over seven years as Senior Policy Advisor to the Boards of the Queensland and Australian Divisions of General Practice, and participated in a number of national committees and working groups, particularly in the area of primary health care financing and workforce.

Kerry is passionate about primary health care and particularly about woman-centred models of maternity care. She was a member of the Queensland Maternity Services Steering Committee, charged with implementing Phase 1 of the Queensland Government's response to the Rebirthing report, from December 2005 to its conclusion in June this year. Between 1996 and 1998 Kerry worked with the inaugural Board of the College of Midwives of British Columbia, Canada, and coordinated the initial registration and assessment process for independent midwives in that province.

Kerry has also worked as a consultant to numerous national health associations including the Rural Doctors Association of Australia; the Australian Association of Pathology Practices; Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association; Aged Care Association of Australia, the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, and the NZ Association of Pathology Practices, providing research and advice on submissions to a range of inquiries and reviews.

# Workshop presentations

## African women living in Toowoomba: Welcome to our world – The different demands of Western society

AGIER, S., DUT, A., SESAY, H., STEVENS, E., & WITHNALL, J. (QPASTT, Australia).
jennifer.withnall@qpastt.org.au

A group of African women will share through discussion and other resources, their experiences of living, studying, working and parenting in Toowoomba. All of the women are refugee entrants via the UNHCR. The women come from five different cultural groups (three nations - Sudan, Sierra Leone and Liberia) and range in settlement time from only one year to up to eleven years of living in Australia. All have found it at times very stressful and difficult even whilst appreciating the opportunities Australia provides. These women have had to adjust to the loneliness of suburban living versus the intimate albeit stressful and dangerous environments of refugee camps. The physical and emotional tests are still real, given the loss of families, culture and community, facing difficulties with transport and demands upon them via Centrelink with respect to learning English or finding a job. Parenting demands have changed as have their own expectations. They have negotiated issues with respect to driving licences, computer courses and childcare. Having food is no longer an issue but carrying it home without assistance, is. Toowoomba is a large rural city, new to embracing multiculturalism. As a community, it has been overwhelmingly monocultural (Anglo-Saxon) until the 1970s when it began to change due to the presence of the university. This context may mean there is very limited understanding of what the new entrants have been through. Whilst the majority of people are accepting, there are no highly integrative social processes occurring to support refugee entrants. The need for information in a complex society is high, but comes slowly when individuals live isolated lives .Paying a bill when you do not speak English well and not realising the voice is a computer, is a typical example of the difficulty involved in making the adjustment. Women who once enjoyed considerable status in their own countries of origin are rendered powerless and humiliated especially when alone or widowed. Some of the authors have met regularly through a parenting support group established by the Kath Dickson Centre which has offered social relief alongside English development in a safe and friendly environment. The program conducts rotational cooking and visits to agencies and health centres alongside talks and conversations assisted by interpreters on subjects such as contraception, family relationships, immunisations and nutritional health. Other authors are involved in study or work, with their children now older and at school.

## Walking "in her shoes": A step toward understanding the journeys of women

ALCOCK, A., & O'BRIEN, M. (Domestic and Family Violence Service SW, Australia).
ann@relateqld.com.au

Domestic violence in the form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual and/or social abuse against an intimate partner is a significant and long-standing problem for the world's women. In 2006, the United Nations estimated that on average at least one in every three women is subject to intimate partner violence in the course of their lifetimes. In 1996, the Australian Bureau of Statistics Women's Safety Survey showed that approximately 42% of Australian women who had been in a previous relationship reported violence by a previous partner, and 8% of women reported violence in their current relationship. In addition to some background information, this workshop aims to help participants to understand the ups and downs a battered woman may experience over the course of many years, through the use of a simulation designed for this purpose. The simulation entitled "In her shoes" was produced by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2000), and is based on the real-life experiences of eight women of various cultural backgrounds living with domestic violence in the USA. Following the provision of some brief background information, participants will be faced with some of the choices, set-backs and experiences of these eight women. Discussion of the insights gained through this process will follow. It is hoped that this experiential workshop will demonstrate to participants that domestic violence is a community tragedy, not a private problem, and that we can all play a role in the movement to end domestic violence.

## Peeling off the layers on values: How do they influence your education, employment and everything?

COLLINS, P., DORMAN, M., & LAWRENCE, J.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia).
collins@usq.edu.au

In times of rapid change and busy lives, there may be few opportunities to reflect on who we are as individuals, and how we interact in various communities, networks or groups. However it is vital that we examine issues that are important to us, and which help to shape our responses and contributions in personal and professional contexts. Each of us makes everyday decisions about people and events, based on values developed and refined according to many different influences. By understanding which values are most important to us, and how these might differ or overlap with those of others, we may apply this knowledge for more effective and strategic decision-making. This workshop is aimed at helping you explore your values and how they influence your choices, decisions and behaviour. Knowing yourself by knowing your own value system helps you make better decisions and understand why you do what you do, and why others may behave differently. This workshop is aimed to be fun, informative and useful to you in a practical way.

## Story-telling: The breath of life between generations

KARETAI, J., & BAZYAAR, M. L.
(Kath Dickson Centre, Australia).
ceo@kathdicksoncentre.com.au

This is a fully interactive and practical workshop focussed on the methodology and the meaning of retelling the stories that link the peoples of a nation together. Participants will learn about the tools for telling stories and will choose from an exciting collection of visceral elements to recreate the stories of their ancestors and their children.

## Spiritual self-worth

MACKAY, A.
(Christian Science Board of Lectureship, Boston MA USA).
abigail_mackay@yahoo.com

This workshop explores spirituality as not just an aspect of identity, but as a defining factor of being and action. It addresses spirituality as having a direct effect on physical and mental well-being, and investigates the underlying cause behind humanity's enduring ideal to live in a world governed by justice, compassion and individual freedom. Spirituality is considered vital to universal progress in this direction, as the core of our being, a core or soul which is not adequately defined by either purely physiological or psychological concepts of identity, and which significantly affects our sense of values, how we relate to one another, and to a larger Principle called God. The workshop takes an inside view of how some of our greatest spiritual thinkers and activists approached spirituality. For example, it draws conclusions about how the prophet Moses would interpret his own experience of seeing the burning bush. This view seeks to come to a more accessible and dynamic invocation of spirituality to empower and free our capacity to express goodness – God. It looks at the practical effects of spirituality to redefine our experience, to replace hopelessness with hope, disease with health, and limits with possibilities.

## The dos and don'ts of mentoring: Why mentoring works for women

MASON, G., DORMAN, M., & DEARDON, R.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia).
masong@usq.edu.au

Mentoring is the process of having a significant beneficial effect on the life or career of another individual, generally as a result of personal one-on-one contact. A mentor is one who offers knowledge, insight, perspective or wisdom that is especially useful to the other person. Traditionally mentoring has been used to assist promising junior executives climb the career ladder. It usually involved a more skilled senior person sponsoring and encouraging the protégée. Very often this happened through informal networks. Recently the concept of mentoring has taken on a new dimension focused more specifically on career direction, goal setting, role models, mentee visibility, networking, support systems, and a revitalisation of self and career. Current practice has also found peer mentoring to be highly effective and while it is important that the mentor should be experienced and be able to pass on the wisdom of that experience to the protégée, it is not always necessary for the mentor to be at a very senior level within an organization Recent practice is also finding that

both parties to the mentor process benefit. In the past it was assumed that mentoring was a one-way process in which only mentees gained. In fact, mentors report that their participation in mentor schemes has given them a fresh perspective on their own lives and careers. Drawing heavily from experiences at the University of Southern Queensland, this interactive workshop will throw new light on the ways in which women are changing the traditional ideas and practice of mentoring. To facilitate the process of identifying career directions and pathways, mind mapping will be used to help participants to record their own profiles, and with input on careers counselling, to identify the best matches between mentors and mentees.

## Travelling through childcare as a mother, student and worker from Sudan to Australia

McCARTHY, S., PAC, N., & MADOR, R.
(Garndoo Jarowair – Inclusion Support Agency, Australia).
smccarthy@lifelinedarlingdowns.org.au

This session takes participants on the journey that two women from Sudan have travelled from Africa to arriving in Queensland as humanitarian entrant refugees. These strong, resilient women share their experiences of child care in Africa and then how they accessed, navigated and understood child care in Australia for their own children. The journey also explores how they gained their own qualifications in child care and then how they have accessed employment in the child care sector. They reflect on the strengths they bring to the sector and the many challenges and barriers they face through the experiences. They have experienced many impacts, frustrations and successes personally as women, mothers, wives, community members, students and new graduates. All Roza's and Nyadier's learnings and reflections can only enhance opportunities for other women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and wholistically enhance the child care sector.

## Re-inventing the American dream: Learning to live with less

MORGAN, B.
(Self-employed, USA).
surlamerdetasman@yahoo.com

This 90 minute workshop presentation assists and inspires the willing to take personal action in de-cluttering our lives of excessive material possessions, to reconnect with the dream we wish we were living. It looks at ways to reform our attitudes towards wilderness and wildlife, to align our spiritual beliefs with the manner in which we walk in the world, and to generate less waste for a healthier planet and unencumbered debt free lives.

## In the name of millions of women around the world

RASIF, F. (U of Southern Qld, Australia), PARWINI, A. (Save the Children US, Afghanistan), & KARIM, N. (Australia)
rasif@aapt.net.au

A group of Afghan women will share through discussion and other resources, their experiences of living, studying, working and parenting in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Australia. All of these women have lived the experience of being refugees, having left their country of origin due to its destruction and losing their basic human rights through war. For one of the women, living in Pakistan as a refugee and watching Afghan refugees living in horror with their families changed her career and directed her life towards helping vulnerable people. She will share some of her experiences working as a primary teacher in refugee camps and as a Non Formal Education and Reproductive Heath Trainer for Afghan refugee women with Save the Children. Another woman will share her experiences living in Brisbane as a refugee. She will describe how two issues combine to create many social and psychological problems for Afghan women in Australia – being Muslim and different from the majority of the population, and coping with restrictions placed on them by their families. Other topics to be discussed will be life as a wife, mother and public servant in Afghanistan and Pakistan and the feelings associated with the loss of the opportunity of being independent in Australia. Their experiences of being women and second-class citizens regardless of which country (West, East), have made them closer to all women around the world. Therefore, this workshop has been entitled "In the name of millions of women around the world".

## Workplace negotiation skills workshop

GARNSWORTHY, M.
(Office of Women, Australia).
Meridy.Garnsworthy@women.qld.gov.au

Need help to get a better deal at work? Changes to industrial relations laws under Work Choices have impacted on working rights and conditions for Queensland women. Studies show that men and women have widely different negotiating styles and women can lose out when it comes to bargaining for their terms and conditions. The Office for Women's Workplace Negotiation Skills Workshop helps women to develop skills and confidence in negotiating workplace agreements. The workshop provides information about different communication styles and core bargaining concepts and gives women practical tools to avoid common mistakes made in bargaining and negotiate better working conditions!

## Truthfulness, compassion, tolerance versus cruel brutality

ZHAO, Y.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia).
yanz@usq.edu.au

One of the most fundamental human rights is freedom of belief, yet in China tens of millions of people are suffering persecution for their faith and beliefs, and women in particular are subjected to despicable cruelty. This workshop presentation aims to bring public awareness to the violent atrocities against women in China's prisons and labour camps, mostly with references to the persecution of Falun Gong practitioners. The presentation intends to, through case studies, discuss such issues as: What is Falun Gong? Why is it being suppressed by the Chinese government? What is happening to Falun Gong practitioners in China? What can the international community do to help stop the atrocities against humanity? Martin Luther King once said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." We are living in a world in which the international community has become more and more interrelated and interdependent. Things that happen in one country can have a global impact on others in many ways. We, as one human race, can no longer afford to stand by and say that those atrocities taking place in China have nothing to do with me.

# Abstracts of non-refereed conference papers

## Stories from Vanuatu

BALMER, A., & BUMSENG, G.
(Lolihor Development Council, Vanuatu)
alexandra_balmer@vanuatu.com.vu

This session tells of how for the first time in the history of the Pacific, women have spent the past year and a half solely governing a local council. The official handover took place on Vanuatu's Chief's Day the 6th March 2006. The Lolihor Development Council has never had any women's members so the hand over marked a big change in the North Ambrym Community and an important opportunity for political participation for women of the area. The Lolihor Development Council, which has been managed by men since its inception 12 years ago is responsible for managing community issues such as Health, Water, Education, Transport, Tourism and Governance. The challenges ahead are discussed.

## Reflections on women using mobile phones

BEN HARUSH, O.
(Qld U of Technology, Australia)
o.benharush@student.qut.edu.au

Women are nearly half of the mobile phone users around the world. As such, they compose a meaningful, interesting and powerful group with potential unique usage characteristics. There are social, economic and political implications to their usage patterns as well as personal significance. This session, which is based on a doctoral research plan, focuses on Australian adult women and their mobile usage behaviour patterns. It includes three sections: 1. A general overview of information regarding women and mobile phones usage. 2. An interactive session with the workshop participants to capture real life anecdotes of everyday mobile usage and its implications. Issues such as safety and security, family values, equality, control, self identity and social networks are raised as part of simulation scenarios. 3. The concluding part of the workshop consists of an open discussion regarding gender differences and wider implications of mobile phone usage while relating to mobiles' cultural, economic and political significance.

## Education, Employment and everything, including the forgotten fight that we think is finished

CHASSAIN, I.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia)
Isabella.Chassain@usq.edu.au

Young women of today's society, particularly the Y Generation, still face many of the battles and obstacles that older generations of women faced, it is just we are now on a different playing field. The women of the Y Generation are generally more qualified and in many cases more independent, however are still faced with a gender gap that has separated them from their male counterparts for many years. Looking particularly from the perspective of a Y Generation student of today, this session shows that although we are in an ever changing and fast paced world, we are still facing many of the same problems just on a different back drop. In many cases we are still juggling a household in all its different setups; a part-time, causal and sometimes even full time job; and at many times trying to complete some form of education be it University or TAFE. It is shown that it is often a struggle to juggle them all, and that in many cases, in order to be successful at one, something has to give, generally one of the others. A number of women of this generation, many of them students, believe that the hard work has been done, where in actual fact it has only just started and we still have a long way to go.

## Problems facing young women in Mongolia

DASHZEVEG, B.
(Young Women's Right Protect Society, Mongolia)
bolortuya@ywrps.org

In 2000, the total population of Mongolia was 2.4 million, with 50.4 % women. Women, especially young women, are most likely to be the victims of violence. In every social sector their rights are violated. The trade in selling young women across the border and crimes such as family violence and violence at work are ever increasing and becoming more organised.

## Indigenous women resisting militarisation in the Pacific: The military impact on small communities

DE ISHTAR, Z.
(U of Qld, Australia)
z.deishtar@uq.edu.au

This paper looks at military build-up sweeping across the northern Pacific and Indigenous women's resistance to same. Special focus is on Australia's role in the new US-Japan-Australia trilateral alliance; the increase of the military presence on Guam; the legacy of US nuclear testing in the Marshall Islands, and the US Kwajalein Atoll Space Warfare facility; and military build-up on Hawaii. The talk focuses on the creative resistance of Indigenous Australian and Pacific women in the face of this build-up.
Zohl been actively involved with Indigenous Australian and Pacific women resisting militarisation for 30 years and is the author of the two pioneering books of women in the region. She is recognised internationally as an expert on the impact of militarisation on small communities.

## Settling refugees

GIBBS, S.
(U of Qld, Australia)
s.gibbs1@uq.edu.au

This session gives an overview of Migration in Australia from the first fleet to the present. It ouches on topics such as the convicts, free settlers, the gold rush, War Refugees, the "White Australia Policy", Assimilation, Integration and Multiculturalism. The speaker asks what these words meant. She looks at why settlers came and continue to do so. She also asks how the pioneers felt, how the new comers feel today, and how we would feel in the same circumstances. Issues explored include culture shock, loss of family, unfamiliarity of food, clothes, language, education, and so on. The talk is accompanied by photos and personal stories.

## Glass ceiling in academe: Whence and whereto?

GUNLUK-SENESEN, G.
(Istanbul U, Turkey)
gulaygs@istanbul.edu.tr

Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is one of the UN Millennium Development Goals. The European Research Area projects include similar goals. At a more specific level, research on glass ceiling in corporate management (e.g. finance, law, industry) is plentiful and popular, but similar research is interestingly limited in the academia. A number of studies on universities in Australia, Israel, Norway, Turkey and UK addressing gender aspects focus more on competence and promotion issues of the academic profession than top positions in decision making. This paper elaborates the glass ceiling issue in the Turkish universities with reference to rectors and deans. There were 2 female rectors (of 50) in 1990s and there are 3 (of 77) at present. The proportion of female deans was 11 % in 1993, 13 % in 2006. Female professors, candidates for these top positions, constituted 21 % in 1993 and 27 % in 2006. The proportion of female academic staff increased from 32 % to 40 %. We calculate several alternative glass ceiling indices and compare faculty compositions of female deans in the last decade. Glass ceiling indicators show that the glass ceiling thickened from 1990s to late 2000s. The findings are discussed against the background of transformation in the Turkish universities and in the context of three areas of challenges: the hierarchy deeply rooted in the current higher education system, the financial restructuring scheme incorporated in the recently introduced public administration reform law and marketisation of higher education.

## The conjurer's new card trick and the illusion of privacy

HART, C.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia)
hartc@usq.edu.au

The Australian Government is introducing a Health and Social Services Access Card by 2008 using smart card technology. Registration for the card will be required by all Australian citizens seeking entitlement to health and social service benefits. The introduction of the Access card is set to occur within an Australian Government-controlled framework of smart cards in which interoperability is a key requirement. The Access Card and the database that supports it both have the potential to permanently erode the established rights of Australian citizens to information privacy currently secured by the Privacy Act 1988. This paper analyses the detrimental impact of the Access card on privacy with respect to three concerns: the potential for function creep; that it is in all respects a quasi-identity card; and that it provides the opportunity for increased identity fraud.

## Small change can make a difference: Stories about Australian women and innovative initiatives in microfinance and ethical investing.

HORSEY, K.
(Foresters ANA Mutual Society, Australia)
ingrid@forestersana.com.au

In this session, drawing on local examples and stories, Kate explores two strategies through which women can use small amounts of money to make a difference for themselves and others. Microfinance is usually associated with the developing world; however a number of microfinance methodologies are successfully in use in Australia, such as savings and loans groups. Using these methods, women can support each other to save, access no or low interest loans and build their knowledge and confidence about money. With the strengthening interest in the environment and ethical investment, there are new opportunities for women to put their investment dollars to work to make a positive contribution to the wellbeing of Australian communities. Kate talks about how several local community organisations that support women have benefited from ethically invested funds.

## Project plan to empowerment

HUNTER, R.
(Australia)
rickyhunter@dodo.com.au

The project plan to empowerment is a carefully devised plan of action to achieve the reactive goal/s of escaping domestic violence and/or the proactive goals of addressing past abuse issues. This talk provides details of strategies of how to address a situation of domestic violence. It shows how to compile a plan and how to select a support team. It stresses the importance of ensuring the back-up teams' availability in time of need, and gives information on how to execute the plan. Other issues discussed are the importance of debriefing and finding and accessing on going support.

## "Teaching is a drug!" Casual academics talk about their work

KEOGH, J., & GARRICK, B.
(U of Qld, Australia)
j.keogh@uq.edu.au

Universities in Australia, like other workplaces, are hierarchical, gendered, and increasingly subject to neoliberal workplace trends associated with industrial reform (IR), including those associated with the Federal Government's 'WorkChoices' legislation. In keeping with, and partially as a result of, such neoliberal workplace reforms, the workplace situations and conditions of those inhabiting the upper echelons of universities (the ivory tower) are being increasing polarised from those, mostly female, workers inhabiting the lower echelons of the academy (the ivory basement). Research has highlighted some worrying statistics regarding the numbers of women who appear to be 'stuck' in the academic ivory basement. However, to date it seems that there have been few studies highlighting the actual experiences of women working at this disempowered level in universities. This paper presents data in the form of a group discussion between a group of casual academic staff regarding their workplace conditions and situations. Analysis of this talk suggests that, although some appreciated what they saw as the flexible arrangements of casual work, this was a dual-edged sword that was seen as also working to disadvantage the future career chances and choices of others. The disadvantages were clearly seen as outweighing the advantages by these participants. Although most took up casual academic work as an anticipated preliminary to permanency within academia, it was acknowledged that such work is not necessarily a direct track to tenure, and that many expected not to be able to obtain permanency. As such, this represents a huge potential loss of both institutional knowledge and expertise to the academy. This paper argues that there is a need for universities to create more flexible and equitable workplace arrangements to better support the needs and realities of casual staff, many of whom are women.

## Child-halving in the family law system and the links with welfare and child support

McINNES, E.
(U of South Australia, Australia)
elspeth.mcinnes@unisa.edu.au

Family law rules in Australia from July 2006 require decision-makers to consider maximum time with each parent, creating a new child-halving template with adverse implications for resident mothers' income support and child support. Only one parent can claim income support as Principal Carer for a dependent child, and when child support formula rules change in July 2008, the resident parent's earnings will face the same income test as those of the non-resident parent. The combination of family law, welfare and child support changes systematically discriminate against single mother families by increasing their exposure to poverty and violence risks.

## Balancing motherhood and work and study as a single parent

MITCHELL, T.
(Australia)
tlmitchell@westnet.com.au

As a single mother of two sons, Toni Mitchell has had to fight for her rights at work as a single mother. She describes how she was judged on being a single mother and not given the same opportunities as the other women to reach higher positions. Even when she passed the tests 100% there was a reluctance to give her promotions. When she tried to work part-time hours to balance her responsibilities at work and to spend more time with her son, she was threatened and bullied at work with losing these hours if she did not complete a fulltime work load. Eventually, when her second son was born, she quit, as her youngest was very ill and had multiple disabilities. She home schools him and is currently studying for a Diploma in Community Development and Welfare through the USQ. She runs a group of volunteers called Speaking From Experience, who talk to schools and other groups about what it is like to live with disabilities and how to break down some barriers and fears. She also runs a playgroup for children with disabilities and is proactive in the community in promoting carers' and disability rights and awareness about disabilities. Toni shares her experiences with other women.

## Women IN sport or women OR sport: The search for work/sport/life balance

MOYLE, G.
(Gene Moyle Psychology, Australia)
moyle.g@bigpond.net.au

The current 'holy grail' for our health and well-being centres around the search for, and establishment of, a work/life balance. For many individuals this appears to be an ever-elusive goal – forever slipping from our grasp as we juggle the day-to-day battle for our attention and time from an array of sources. When we add the word 'Women' to this mix, often the number of sources related to these demands multiplies in alignment with the number of roles we fill. To take this to even another level, consider the additions of the words 'Sport' or 'Elite athlete' to "Women' and "Work/life balance', and the search for the 'holy grail' becomes more literal! Many sportswomen at the elite level face significant challenges in balancing working to support themselves and/or their families, studying to lay the foundations of a post-sport career, (often) spending the equivalent of full-time hours training towards their sporting goals, and additionally investing in things that are important to them outside of these two areas – the 'Life' component. Getting the work/life balance 'balanced' has been suggested to be a key component of investing in our health and well-being. The same is applicable to sportswomen, with the added suggestion that if the balance between work/sport/life is achieved, this can positively impact on sporting performance itself. These ideas and observations will be explored via experience within the Australian elite sporting environment from a psychologist's perspective, with questions and invitations for further discussion.

## The emergence of female da'ie in Malaysia

MUTALIB, M. H. A.
(U of Qld, Australia)
mimihanida@yahoo.com.au

Since the 1970s, the phenomenon of dakwah to educate and guide the Muslim community following Islamic principles has become more important in Malaysia. Recently, however, Muslim women have become an integral part of this phenomenon. They play an increasingly important role in this new form of contemporary Islamic dakwah. These Muslim women 'da'ies' take the initiative and the responsibility for

educating and guiding the Muslim community in line with Islamic teaching. These female da'ies are a significant presence in broadcasting media and are currently very successful at appealing to young viewers and attracting them towards religious programmes. The study of the challenges, obstacles, realities and the future possibilities of the female da'ies is, therefore, crucially important. We need to identify the strength of, and the limitation imposed on the modern female da'ie. The research presented in this paper looks more specifically at the gender issues, such as the support (or otherwise) Muslim women da'ies receive in areas like government, media broadcasters, NGOs, and their family. The research adds empirical data to the debates surrounding, and often the denial of, Muslim women's contribution to the public sphere in Muslim societies and, specifically, Malay culture. Hence, it presents a more rounded portrayal of Muslim women and provides a clearer and more complex picture of Muslim women's 'real' lives.

## Quo vadis, New Delhi? Women and spiritually oriented sustainability

NARAYANAN, Y.
(Murdoch U, Australia)
y.narayanan@murdoch.edu.au

This paper makes an argument that spirituality and sustainability have strong productive links, and that this partnership may particularly serve to enhance women's leadership roles in the sustainable development process. The paper's particular focus is the city of Delhi in India, where it seeks the perspectives of twenty women who are all associated with development planning and implementation in various capacities, on the partnership between spirituality and sustainability. The paper is preoccupies itself with this small pilot study. Their viewpoints show that there is indeed potential for spirituality to be used as a pragmatic methodology in implementing sustainability in the rapidly developing city. Importantly, this partnership has specific implications for women, because it allows a creative space for women's leadership, as well as addresses issues that pivotally concern women. Importantly, it reveals the rich trends of spiritual beliefs and practices that describe the urban lifestyles of the women. The analysis of the experiences of the women who constantly negotiate with the urban environment supports the argument that a spiritual approach to urban community planning could be mutually beneficial to the community and its women in achieving a more sustainable way of living. These findings are crucial to any study or strategy considering comprehensive sustainable development for Delhi.

## It's not our bodies that need changing, but our weight-related attitudes and beliefs

PARRY, M.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia)
parrym@usq.edu.au

While increasing rates of obesity and associated health risks receive regular public attention and condemnation in Western society, little attention is directed toward prejudice and discrimination toward fat persons. The perception of fatness as an unacceptable state of unhealthiness, ugliness, and badness, has consequences for many Australian women, with 45% considered overweight or obese (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Anti-fat attitudes and beliefs can have detrimental psychological, social, health and economic consequences for fat women, including weight discrimination in employment, education, and health care. Weight-related attitudes and beliefs affect women in general, many of whom are dissatisfied with their bodies and report feeling and fearing fat. The implications of anti-fat attitudes and weight-related beliefs for Western women are discussed. This paper explores attitudes towards fat persons, and beliefs about weight, fatness and fat persons, and the interrelationships between such attitudes and beliefs. Quantitative and qualitative findings from research exploring weight-related attitudes and beliefs of Australian university students and adults are discussed. Attitudes toward fat persons can be predicted from weight-related beliefs, such as personal responsibility for becoming fat and benefits of weight loss. Such beliefs reflect widely held assumptions about the causes, treatment, and consequences of fatness. This paper reviews research and discourse that challenges fat-related assumptions, such as fat people are necessarily unhealthy and responsible for becoming fat, weight loss will improve health, and dieting is effective. A 'health at every size' approach is proposed.

## Blaming it on our mothers: Rehearsing the play of our lives

PRYDE, B. (U of Southern Qld, Australia), NOYES, A. (Australia), & BODAK, R. (Blue Care, Australia)
pryde@usq.edu.au

A Brisbane playwright realised that three women she knew had moved to Toowoomba. The three women didn't know each other so she decided that they should meet. Sharing a meal, wine, and conversation the women bonded. Since then they have done more than just eat, drink and chat together: they have edited a play, rehearsed it, produced it and even made some money out of it. This paper reflects on the uniquely female experience of staging the playwright's musical meditation on womanhood: "Blame It On Your Mother". Without substantial knowledge of how to produce a play for public performance, the women juggled work and family in order to redraft, rehearse, market, and finally perform the play for International Women's Day. As the women explored the play's characters in the rehearsal studio, the coffee shop, and the kitchen, they found themselves sharing stories of their own children, mothers and grandmothers. Rehearsing the play became what they termed a 'female' experience. This paper should be of interest to anyone who is endeavouring to work creatively with friends as it discusses the women's journey from friends to theatre producers. It should also appeal to women who are trying to find their voice as it argues that females can empower themselves, but only when they feel ready to do so. Moreover, Blaming It On Our Mothers: rehearsing the play of our lives should be of interest to all females as it attempts to define what can make an experience a 'female' experience.

## The balancing act: Women, work and wholeness

ROSE, J., & SCHAARE, P.
(Education Qld, Australia)
judy.rose@aztec-it.com.au

This paper examines how the recent changes to work laws, including Work Choices and Australian Workplace Agreements, position women at an increasingly 'at risk' status in term of equity in the work place. Work Choices legislation is impacting on women who are baring the brunt of caring responsibilities as well as juggling work commitments. With the diminishing security in the workplace, women are increasingly expected to do more hours for less, inhibiting any chance of achieving a work-life balance. Many mothers who walk the daily tightrope of duties including childcare, eldercare, work (paid and unpaid) are most at risk of meltdown. Workplace initiatives that not only promote work-life balance but an opportunity for wholeness are explored so that women can move beyond the 'superwoman' myth.

## Worklife balance at universities of Pakistan: Perspective of gender equity

SULTANA, S.
(Higher Education Commission, Pakistan)
sabihaqau@hotmail.com

The present research is carried out to study the existing policies for teachers at universities of Pakistan and the potential demand for family friendly policies to achieve a balance in personal and professional life. Ten universities were selected from both Public and Private sector for taking sample of the study. The sample consisted of 200 representative teachers. The research was conducted in several phases. During the first phase, manuals of policies and procedures were taken from universities to get insight in to the existing policies. In the second phase, a work-life balance questionnaire was adapted, which was originally developed by the Centre for Diversity Policy Research, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK. In the third phase, after conducting a pilot study and getting satisfactory feed back, the questionnaire was administered on a large sample to collect information. The major findings of the study indicate that teachers are less satisfied with their job due to inflexible work policies. 94% respondents agreed to have a balance in their paid work and personal life as they think people have different needs at different stages of their life and they need to vary their working patterns in order to balance paid employment and personal life. 90% favored work-life balance because it enhances performance. Women showed a strong desire to have family friendly policies because in their present work circumstances they feel especially marginalised and over burdened due to the competing requirements of their personal and professional life.

## Tall black poppy: The social and emotional impacts of an Indigenous woman working at university

TOOMBS, M.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia)
toombsm@usq.edu.au

Research has suggested that despite efforts to improve retention and attendance rates for Indigenous students, retention rates still remain poor at secondary and tertiary levels. As a past student, and one of only two in a cohort of 28 to

complete the pre tertiary bridging program here at USQ in 1993, it is heartbreaking to see Indigenous students not completing courses. As an Indigenous academic working at USQ, my role is to lecture in Indigenous studies, embed Indigenous perspectives into schools' curricula, and to provide support for Indigenous students. Having overcome personal adversity to complete my degree, the ideal of seeing Indigenous students succeed is a major goal for me. Education is considered to be the key factor in improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians. Research has suggested that higher levels of educational attainment lead to better employment prospects, which in turn affect income, standard of housing and access to better health care. Participation in education continues to rise across all sectors including University, yet despite these improvements, participation and attainment remain lower than that of other Australians. As an Indigenous woman working in this current climate, the challenge of managing a family, community responsibility, post graduate study and looking after myself, can be very traumatic at times. Finding the balance between personal and professional responsibilities is a never-ending struggle. The focus of this paper is two-fold: Firstly, a personal account of my struggles as an Indigenous woman undertaking study and employment at a University; and secondly, how this has impacted on my social and emotional wellbeing.

## Raise the bar and crash the glass ceiling

TRAVERS, J.
(U of Adelaide, Australia)
jen.travers@adelaide.edu.au

The case for gender equality in the legal profession would seem indisputable, given almost equal numbers of women and men in Australian law schools in 2007. Advocates of gender equity claim women lawyers face a glass ceiling which poses significant barriers to women, who struggle against the force of dominant norms. Its effects are noted both in the crucial early years of their careers and again when women attempt to step beyond the traditional role of employed practitioner into partnership roles and positions of greater power and influence at the Bar and in the profession. Present discussion has focused on whether this is a result of discrimination, or whether there other forces at play in the legal profession. Addressing an arguably narrow aspect of gender, we consider the stinging critique of the adversarial system by a senior crown prosecutor in New South Wales, in 2005 and consider its consequences both personally and in a decision in an alleged rape case in 2007. In promoting victims' rights and citing actual examples in the Sir Ninian Stephen lecture, she put the community before her own ambition. She aspired to join the senior echelons of the Bar but was unsuccessful in her fifth application for silk, notwithstanding widespread support. Through this example we reflect on attempts to create and incorporate initiatives to promote gender equality in the legal profession. Without such reform, the glass ceiling threatens to undermine public confidence in the legal system. Successful reform will greatly benefit Australia in that only then would the legal profession truly reflect the diversity of our society and help us to achieve our strategic goals in terms of retention and advancement of women lawyers.

## Women and the law

WALKER, K.
(Australia)
kmwalker@ozemail.com.au

The incidence of divorce and attendant marital property settlements between the respective parties has increased exponentially since the enactment of the Australian Family Law Act 1975. The opportunities for women to command income commensurate with their male peers commonly diminish with the interruption of their career development as a result of child rearing commitments. Recent evidence suggests the lump sum adjustment of marital property to reflect the generally superior income earning capacity of the male party is difficult to achieve in small pool property cases. This paper provides an overview of the impact of some family law property settlements on the financial security of Australian women and the case for payment of spousal maintenance post property settlement.

## "What a smile can hide eh?" The violence in pregnancy paradox

WALSH, D.
(U of Qld, Australia)
d.walsh@social.uq.edu.au

This paper reports on the findings of a uniquely Australian study that measured both physical and psychological violence in a sample of 400 pregnant women. The study was unique as the researcher is a family violence specialist practitioner bringing to the research practice

wisdom from the field. The study found that 27% of women reported experiencing physical and psychological violence in their current or immediate past intimate partner relationships. Of these, 20% reported a combination of physical and psychological violence, 4.5% reported psychological violence only and 2.5% of women reported that all the nominated behaviours decreased during the pregnancy. A number of women experiencing ongoing violence suffered in silence, disclosing only in the context of the research once having been assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the research process. This study did not find overwhelming evidence to suggest that violence started or escalated for most women in this sample. Instead, it was found that for the majority of women, a past history of violence during the relationship was a strong indicator for the violence to continue in some form throughout the pregnancy. It was found that a range of abusive behaviours were reported by the women interviewed, which has resulted in four very distinct profile groups emerging from the data. These are presented with the demographics of each group revealing results that will challenge some long held assumptions.

## Are Australian female managers control freaks?

WIESNER, R., & POOLE, N.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia)
wiesner@usq.edu.au

This study attempts to fill some of the gaps in existing studies by considering the change management styles of Australian small and medium size enterprise (SME) female managers in the introduction of organisational change initiatives. Four change management styles are examined, including: widespread involvement of employees in decisions; consultation with employees with possible limited involvement in goal setting; managerial authority and direction as the main form of decision-making; and managerial initiation and implementation of change. Owing to the dearth of national data on managerial styles within Australian SMEs, the results of this study are used to determine whether female managed SMEs are characterised by a 'participative' or 'directive' orientation in the introduction of organisational change initiatives. The results reporting a national study (N = 1435) on employee management in Australian SMEs reveal that contrary to general belief, female managed SMEs employ moderate to low participative styles in the introduction of organisational change initiatives and are more control-oriented than their male counterparts. However, these findings by themselves do not support a managerial 'control' scenario for Australian female SME managers and results should be interpreted with caution owing to a number of issues. Some of these issues are outlined and directions for future research identified. This study provides a sound basis for further research in gender related issues within Australian SMEs.

## Welfare to work not education

WHITE, C.
(U of Southern Qld, Australia)
whitech@usq.edu.au

On 1 July 2006, the Australian Government introduced reforms to the welfare system that seeks to encourage and support capable individuals into work; this initiative is the Welfare to Work package. New eligibility rules for income support payments were introduced that aim to increase the labour market and also reduce the reliance upon the welfare system. These new rules are an attempt to provide incentives for recipients to engage in at least part-time work or undertake participation requirements, a concept that is ill-defined and subjective. This initiative has implications for recipients of the Disability Support Pension and Parenting Payment as it appears to be a disincentive for such individuals to engage in study within the higher education system. For some individuals who choose to undertake full-time study, this can equate to a loss of up to $165.70 per fortnight due to new payment arrangements. In the 21st century, women are returning to a situation whereby their career aspirations could be significantly impaired as a result of their choice to have children.

# Refereed papers

# Educating Women: Enabling or Disabling – A Case Study

**Elisabeth Adcock (adcockb@usq.edu.au)**
Faculty of Education
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

This study argues that many women from all parts of the globe have, for far too long, been oppressed and had their human rights denied, regardless of education, social status, ethnicity or wealth. This significant assertion will be supported by the case study of Aung San Suu Kyi and her ongoing struggle for political freedom in Burma. It is argued that her unfortunate position illustrates the situation of women world-wide, as she strives against oppression by traditional male authority, such as a military regime. Aung San Suu Kyi is one of the most controversial female world figures, attracting international attention and endless media speculation. As the leader of the pro-democracy movement in Burma, the National League for Democracy, Suu Kyi is engaged in a fierce, protracted struggle for recognition from the country's military leaders who consider her efforts treasonous. In May 1990, her political party won 80% on the vote at the parliamentary elections. Suu Kyi had been placed under house arrest in July 1989 and for most of the time since then has been under detention. This paper addresses the 'struggle for democracy' undertaken by Aung San Suu Kyi, her political oppression, detention and human rights issues. This analysis focuses on her position as it applies to women attempting to break through the "marble ceiling" in their fight for equality.

## Introduction

Education for women has often been seen as the bridge from oppression to self- actualisation and equality and brings about improvement in society. Over the past centuries the expectations of education for girls has changed, as it waxed and waned in the public interest, but it was through the efforts of remarkable women such as the eighteenth English woman, Mary Woolstonecraft, that the limited expectations of women were expanded. She contested Rousseau's notion that women should be educated to make them attractive and pleasing to men as she believed that this contributed to women's unequal education and subordination. (Gutek, 2005, p. 210) Woolstonecraft asserted that women should be educated in the whole knowledge of professions and occupations, not only to become nurses, but study medicine and become physicians as well. If women were educated they could be free of dependency on men and this independence would lead to the right to participate in politics and have the right to vote. Her efforts and theories continued to be built upon in the nineteenth century when fear of uprisings, following the French Revolution, took hold in England and a demand for a system of state education, free to all, began to be articulated. While there were many movements in Europe and the United States to establish public schools and allow children from all classes on society access to them, the motives of the founders were mixed. New theories on child development such as the first kindergarten, established in Germany in 1837 by Friedrich Froebel encouraged the establishment of many schools. Because of these schools, education for females was not entirely ignored,. One reason for including them was that educated women would have a calming influence on men and so promote social stability (Boxer & Quataert, 1987)

In the twentieth century, progress was made when many milestones in educational rights for women were accomplished. Firstly, at the end of World War One, in 1918, English women over the age of 30 were given the right to vote and then, between the wars, in many countries, girls' schools were established and there followed a steady rise in the numbers of girls progressing to higher education. (French, 1990)

Later, in the 1960s, there was an upheaval in the form of the feminist movement which caused women to question deep-rooted assumptions about their place in society and placed women and their education in the political arena. This period provided new opportunities for women in areas of employment while raising their expectations. But most importantly, it improved the sense of self-worth of women as a whole (Boxer & Quataert, 1987) Employers expected higher levels of education for young people, and in the case of girls, there was a growing awareness that a good schooling was essential. This awareness had spread to various countries in South-east Asia following the end of the Second World War and the upheaval of nationalism. Many forward thinking parents took care to educate their daughters, Aung San Suu Kyi being one of them.

## Case Study

### Aung San Suu Kyi: Her Education.

This case study seeks to discover if there are genuine indications that education was the key factor in Aung San Suu Kyi's struggle for freedom in Burma. In order to discover the background of education of women during the past and in the present situation, in the case of Aung San Suu Kyi, a wide range of texts have been consulted to allow for opinions of critics, as well as

works written by Suu Kyi herself. It is essential to appreciate the background and perspectives that emerge from Suu Kyi's writing, especially in Aung San of Burma, a book that she wrote about her father's life, which is particularly revealing in its identification of Aung San's place in history through his daughter's own perception. (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991)

Aung San Suu Kyi was born on 19 June 1945 in Rangoon, at a significant time in the history of Burma following the Second World War, when the country was engaged in a struggle for independence from Britain following Japanese occupation. She is the only daughter and youngest child of the Burmese nationalist leader Aung San, a Buddhist, who is considered to be the father of modern Burma, an honoured, national hero and cultural icon. Her mother Khin Kyi, a Christian, became the first woman to head a Burmese diplomatic posting as Burma's ambassador to India in 1960.

Suu Kyi's early education began in Rangoon at St. Francis Convent, and then the Methodist English High School. Clearly, her destiny had been set towards an education directed at the West through the influence of Christian education, rather than traditional Buddhist instruction. The values, duties and pastoral care from these schools may have provided a more comfortable transition to study and life in the West. When her mother moved to India in 1960, Suu Kyi was enrolled at an exclusive school attended by Rajiv Gandi, who was to become the Prime Minister of India. After studying briefly at Delhi University, Suu Kyi began her serious Western education in England at St. Hugh's College, Oxford University, where she studied philosophy, politics and economics. It is suggested that she was influenced in her choice of major subjects because of a strong sense of duty towards Burma. In an interview in the Financial Times, (24 October 1988), she admitted that she would have preferred to study English, Japanese or forestry, but her choice was influenced by what she understood to be of most use to a developing country. Suu Kyi was awarded her B.A. in 1967, followed in 1990, by an M.A. Honorary Fellowship, from Oxford University.

This Western education led to employment, when from 1967 to 1971, Suu Kyi moved to live in the United States, working as an assistant secretary for the Advanced Committee on Administration and Budgetary Questions, at the United Nations Secretariat, New York.

It was while studying at Oxford, that Suu Kyi met her future husband, Michael Aris, an Englishman, who was studying Tibetan civilisation, a field in which he became recognised as an international authority. In 1972, she returned to England to marry him, and the following year they moved to live in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan where Michael was employed as a tutor to the royal family. Because of her experience with the United Nations, Suu Kyi was employed as a research officer on United Nations affairs by the Foreign Ministry.

In 1973, Suu Kyi returned to Oxford with her husband, where her two sons were born and she devoted herself to learning more about her late father, Aung San, who had been assassinated when she was just two years old. In her book Freedom from Fear, her husband observes that "Some would say she became obsessed with the image of the father she never knew". (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1995, p. xviii) Certainly, she consciously and regularly refers to his political legacy. In her search into her father's past, Suu Kyi could hope to fully understand what was past and link its meaning to the present, in the sense that Aung San's murder robbed Burma of the benefits of his personal leadership. Therefore, Suu Kyi took up the mantle, as a kind of natural imperative to follow her father's ambition in line with the paternalistic society of Burma. In the introduction of Aung San of Burma, Roger Matthews comments on Suu Kyi's references to her political connections through her father. In response to criticism that she knew nothing about the politics of Burma, she replied, "The trouble is that I know too much" (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991). While this statement may be true, Suu Kyi has been referred to by her military opponents as "the Oxford housewife", encoding her as the ultimate Western woman with no political stance in Burma. In her defence, Joseph Silverstein has argued that, "On the basis of her education and writing, her experience at the United Nations, in Japan, India and the Himalayan states, and her observation in Burma, she is better prepared than most to comment on, and criticise the rule of the military and to argue for an alternative system – a return to the democratic ideas of her father" (Lwyn, 1994, p. 60).

Her research on her father was further developed when, in 1985, she travelled to Japan as a Visiting Scholar, employed by the Centre for Southeast Asian Studied at the University of Kyoto. This research allowed her to look at Burmese material from World War 11, and more importantly, documents related to her father and his 'Thirty Comrades", a group of young nationalists who were trained by the Japanese in the early 1940s to overthrow British rule in Burma (Silverstein, 1993). She also interviewed people in Japan who remembered her father, while she and her youngest son Kim, who accompanied her to Japan, learnt Japanese language. Birtil Lintner (1990, p. 15) considers that this time in Japan was important to her intellectual development as she had time to reflect on her father and to recognise who she was in historic terms.

Reuniting with her husband and eldest son Alexander, in Simla, northern India, Suu Kyi was offered, and accepted, a fellowship to work on a manuscript comparing Burmese and Indian nationalism.

This was when she wrote the extended essay *Burma and India – Some Aspects of Intellectual Life under Colonialism* (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1995). Upon returning to Oxford with her family in 1987, Suu Kyi decided to enrol for further study – a doctoral program in Burmese literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies of London University. She had just begun this thesis when, in 1988, her mother suffered a stroke, and Suu Kyi returned to Rangoon to care for her. For four months she stayed by her mother in hospital, eventually bringing Khin Kyi to her family home in University Avenue, Rangoon, to live out her last days.

In late July 1988, there was the explosive situation when Ne Win, an original member of Aung San's "Thirty Comrades", and leader of the Socialist Program Party for twelve years, resigned. The leaders of the armed forces then established the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the supreme political power in Burma. They seized power, suspended the Constitution and abolished all institutions established under it (Ang, 1998). In 1985 Suu Kyi had written of her country, "The economy has not been well managed and Burma today is not a prosperous nation. However, with its wealth of natural resources, there is always hope for its future, and that future lies in the hands of its people" (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991, p. 57). In 1988, the people had begun to strive for this future. Conscious of her family obligations in the United Kingdom, Suu Kyi tried to remain in a neutral position, but in August, the military government massacred people in the streets and she saw the demonstrations all across the country. People carried portraits of her father, Aung San, a reminder that he had once supported a free, democratic and prosperous Burma. Suu Kyi now recognised the time had arrived to continue the legacy of her father. The family tradition in the "second struggle for independence" fell upon the daughter. In a patriarchal society such as Burma this caused surprise, but according to Josef Silverstein, Burmese women had held important positions of influence and power during the colonial period and also during the nationalist struggle (Lintner, 1990). Since 1962, however, the military-dominated dictatorship has reduced the role of women in politics.

In the Asian region, much pride has been taken by the traditional societies in sameness and stability, and western education has been seen, not so much as a threat, but rather irrelevant to those whose future was in the control of these societies (Milner, 1996) In Burma, in the 1880s, Western education, in the form of missionary conversion was not just for boys, but also focused on girls, particularly the ethnic Karen group. The Karen Girls Training School and a maternal association for Karen women were established in 1885 by American Baptist missionaries. These establishments, especially the latter, were used to gain recruits to Christianity among children by working through the concerns of mothers, and thus advocating that education had cultural values in domestic life (Lwyn, 1994). Post-colonial discourse on Burma often repeats the 'motherhood' discourse of the missionaries from colonial Burma. This notion of women who are innately peaceful, de-politicises women's role in revolution and renders them powerless. They must, as the Third World woman, patiently wait. Aung San Suu Kyi is much more complicated as she moves between two contradictory positions of being a 'Western' subject and 'Third World' Other.

Discourse on Aung San Suu Kyi suggests that in the post colonial era, she is an embodiment of Western ideals and therefore acceptable and trustworthy to the West. The converse suggestion is that she is seen by her detractors as an agent of the West, thus perceived as the *Other*, whose power as a Third World woman is considered illegitimate. More controversially, Lwyn (1994) has suggested that "Her insight into the situation in Burma is explained in terms of 'Western' influence, rather than an insight that was born of being Burmese" (p. 70). She may be all these things, but a deeper awareness of her position to the people of Burma emerged when she heard the reports of the army firing on unarmed protesters, killing as many as three thousand citizens between August 8 and August 13, 1988. There was a general conviction that she could not remain inactive when she was reported as stating, "I obviously had to think about it. But my instinct was, this is not a time when anyone who cares can stay out. As my father's daughter, I feel I had a duty to get involved" (Current Biography, 1992, p. 5). This sense of duty could have been a result of her deep respect for her father and country, or perhaps a result of her Western education directing her attention to constructing a political system which would lead to a free and equable nation where she could apply her understanding of democracy.

Aung San Suu Kyi did become involved, making her first major public speech on 26 August 1988, at the Shwedagon Pagoda, Burma's most sacred shrine, before a crowd of more than 500 000 people, during which she emphasised the importance of human rights. The most important one was the right to choose one's government, which she identified as 'Burma's second struggle for independence'. Her study of Western politics could have influenced her call for free elections. It has been claimed that her most important support to the movement was her strong attachment to the armed forces, based on awareness of their former revolutionary role of which her father was an original leader. The events of August – September, 1988 which involved civil unrest in the form of huge demonstrations and strikes, led to the SLORC's crack-down on human rights in Burma. It closed the

universities, banned political demonstrations and gatherings of more than four people, while at the same time claiming the right to arrest and sentence citizens without trial. Aung San Suu Kyi was not deterred by this licence to kill, and continued her rallies against the SLORC around the country. She was almost gunned down on 5 April 1989 by six soldiers who were ordered to kill her (Ang, 1998). The SLORC insisted that Suu Kyi was taking part in a demonstration, guilty of breaking the law. For her part, Suu Kyi held little hope that the military junta would allow multi-party elections to be held in 1990, but continued her defiance, accusing the junta of showing its "true fascist colours" after it gave authority to the army to execute political protesters without trial. (Current Biography, 1992, p.7)

Aung San Suu Kyi had been placed under house arrest on 20 July 1989, arousing international condemnation against the Burmese military government over the detention. In May, 1990, ten months after her arrest, Suu Kyi's party won 392 of the 485 seats contested. In two years, Suu Kyi had succeeded in demonstrating that the SLORC's claim that they were the rightful rulers of Burma to be contrary to the wishes of the people. (Ang, 1998) That election result is the main factor in the apparent permanent inability of Suu Kyi and the military regime to negotiate with each other. She claims that Burma elected a democratic government, and that it must be honoured.

International condemnation was again aroused against Suu Kyi's detention by the military junta when she was awarded the Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize for Freedom of thought in July 1991, and the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize in October 14 of the same year.

During her long detention, Suu Kyi continued to write and reflect. Her fourth publication, *Letters from Burma*, a collection of fifty-two letters written for a Japanese newspaper was written soon after her limited release from house-arrest in 1995. This collection was awarded the Japanese Newspaper Association's Award for 1996. They contain a transcript of the opening keynote address by Aung San Suu Kyi, read on video to the NGO Forum on Women in Beijing in 1995, and her many press interviews and statements.

This year Suu Kyi turned 62, imprisoned in her neglected home in Rangoon, and has spent more than 11 years in detention (Buncombe, 2007). Her phone has been disconnected and her mail intercepted by one of the most repressive regimes in the world. Basic human rights have been denied. For example, when her husband was dying of prostrate cancer, he was denied a visa into Burma to visit Suu Kyi and she knew that by leaving the country to visit him, she would not be allowed re-entry to Burma. While the mental battle persists between the military government and Aung San Suu Kyi, one must consider how this amazing woman sustains her mental strength. In her writings she makes reference to more involvement with her religion and speaks of *metta* (loving kindness), a vital part of Buddhism. She indicates that *metta* exists within her political party (Aung San Suu Kyi, 1997). While her Western education has given Suu Kyi insight into the world outside Burma, she has attempted to come to terms with the two traditions. She has stated that even without the sophisticated techniques and methods of economic and political analysis common in the West, the Burmese could find answers to the terrible socio-economic conditions and political problems in Burma by turning to the words of the Buddha and applying them to their situation (Silverstein, 1996). This indicates that Suu Kyi accepts that her education cannot overcome the traditional attitudes of the Burmese.

Just recently, the State Peace and Development Council, formally the SLORC, announced that Suu Kyi's detention had been extended, even though it was due to expire at the end of May 2007. At the current ASEAN meeting, the US have publicly criticised the Asian group for, "failing to bring enough pressure on Burma to restore democracy and free Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi" (ASEAN aligns, 2007, p. 12).

Has education enabled or disabled Aung San Suu Kyi? She has considerable influence at the grass-roots level in the form of public support, however, the military junta that controls Burma ignores Suu Kyi and her political party, implying the adherence to the Asian tradition of sameness and stability, ignoring a western educated woman and her ideas for change. Education has enabled Suu Kyi to achieve recognition by the international community of her struggle for human rights in Burma and because of her cross-cultural experience, place her on the world stage. These experiences may have allowed Suu Kyi self-actualisation as her patriotic passion shines through her actions, but despite her commitment to democracy and an unfailing faith in the Burmese people, there remains clear evidence that she is effectively isolated, caged and silenced by the military who intend to retain control of Burma. The military would seem to see her as an icon of the intruding West, as evidenced by her marriage to an Englishman and years spent living outside Burma. The full possibilities of what she wanted to achieve for the future may not become reality within her life-time and her writings may well constitute the most enduring testimony to Suu Kyi's life and work. This study is surely evidence that there is now a "marble ceiling" preventing one educated woman from attaining her full potential and making a difference for her country and the society which is being denied basic human rights.

## References

Ang C. G. (1998). *Aung San Suu Kyi towards a new freedom,* Sydney: Prentice Hall.

ASEAN aligns on human rights commission. (2007, July 31). *The Australian, p 12.*

Aung, S. S. K. (1991) *.Aung San of Burma.* Edinburgh: Kiscadale Publications.

Aung, S. S. K. (1995). *Freedom from fear and other writings.* London: Penguin.

Aung, S. S. K. (1997). *Letters from Burma*, London: Penguin.

Boxer, M. J. & Quataert, J. H. (1987). *Connecting spheres: Women in the western world, 1500 to the present.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Buncombe, A. (2007, June 19). The big question: Why is Aung San Suu Kyi still under arrest, and is there any hope of release? *The Independent. Retrieved July 3, 2007 from hhtp://news.independent.co.uk/world/asia/article2675740.ece*

*Current Biographical Yearbook*, (1992, February). 53(2), 27-31.

*Financial Times*, (1988, October 24)

French, J. (1990). *The education of girls: A handbook for parents.* London: Cassell Education.

Gutek, G. L. (2005). *Historical and philosophical foundations of education,* (4), New Jersey: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Lintner, B. (1990). *Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's unfinished renaissance,* Monash Victoria: Centre of Southeast Asian Studies.

Lwyn, T. (1994). Stories of gender and ethnicity: Discourses of colonialism and resistance in Burma, *Australian Journal of Anthropology,* Special Issue 5.

Milner, A. (Ed.). (1996). *Comparing cultures.* Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Silverstein, J. (1993). *Political legacy of Aung San,* (rev. ed.). New York: Cornell University.

Silverstein, J. (1996). The idea of freedom in Burma and the political thought of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, *Pacific Affairs,* 69(2), 211-228.

# Restoring the Balance: Women's Experiences of Retiring from Elite Sport

**Majella J. Albion (albionm@usq.edu.au)**
Department of Psychology
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

Being an elite athlete requires single-minded determination, commitment, and focus on sport. These can have a detrimental effect on long-term career plans, with decisions and preparations for life after sport being put on hold for a time, or being given a lower priority. In order to assist athletes take a longer-term and more holistic view of their life goals, the Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program was developed through the Australian Institute of Sport. This paper presents a brief overview of a 5-year longitudinal study which was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the ACE program and looks specifically at the sport and retirement experiences of four female elite-level athletes: three netballers, and a gymnast. While their experiences may not be seen as representative of elite athletes in general, this paper provides an interesting insight into the retirement experiences of these four women.

## Introduction

International and national research over the past few decades has indicated that due to the high level of determination and commitment associated with involvement in sport at an elite level, athletes experience many difficulties with career planning, identity foreclosure, and transition away from sport. Much of the research into the personal and psychological development of athletes has focused on two main issues. The first is the concept of "athletic identity", which has been defined as the extent to which one labels oneself as an athlete (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993), and the second relates to concerns that athletes face in making the transition away from sport.

These two issues have often been linked, with studies (e.g., Brewer, Selby, Britton, Linder, & Petitpas, 1999; Webb, Nasco, Riley, & Headrick, 1998) demonstrating that a strong adherence to an athletic identity was significantly related to retirement and adjustment difficulties. While athletic identity has favourable associations with greater sport involvement and motivation, it has generally been viewed as having a preponderance of negative outcomes, such as increased risk of emotional disturbance following injury, and excessive training that might jeopardise good health (Brewer et al., 1999); and limited socialisation, a devaluing of education, and lack of career maturity (Brown & Hartley, 1998; Murphy, Petitpas, & Brewer, 1996).

Identity formation is a life-long process which occurs as individuals heed and internalise the appraisals of people whose opinions they value (Harter, 1996). It is integral to healthy and adaptive development. Self-concept or self-identity is seen as multidimensional (Bracken, 1992) and is represented as a diverse set of images and conceptions about the self (Cantor, Markus, Niedenthal, & Nurius, 1986). These many and varied identities each has the potential to motivate and direct behaviour (Cantor et al.).

Webb et al. (1998) suggested that the reason for the detrimental impact of the athletic identity was that it differed from other role identities in significant ways. They noted that identity as an athlete is often formed and internalised much earlier than other identities. Many of those who have risen to the elite level in their sport have shown talent and participated in their sport from a very early age. This can lead to identity foreclosure, which is the premature adoption of a personal or career identity. Webb et al. also noted that because of the kudos associated with sporting excellence, sporting identity is likely to dominate and subsume all other identities. They said that athletic identity is also different from other identities in that it often has a public dimension, and is defined by performance pressure, and the high level of status and esteem which it provides is unlikely to be achieved through other means.

The extensive amount of time spent in sporting pursuits limits exposure to other roles and to non-sporting social contact (Brown et al., 2000), and can leave identity foreclosed athletes ill-prepared for a future beyond sport. Early research into athlete identity (McPherson, 1980) found that many problems faced by athletes were a result of their being focused in the present, and not developing post-sporting career options. Their success and high profile leads to a high level of ego-involvement in their sporting identity, which means their self-esteem is largely based on their continued performance (Webb et al., 1998), and also leads to high, and for many, unrealistic expectations of playing at professional levels (Weichman & Williams, 1997). Kornspan and Etzel (2001) also warned that if an individual's self-concept is based on athletic ability, he or she may lack confidence in other areas.

### Transition out of Sport

The associated problems relating to transition away from sport have also been the subject of much research. Webb et al. (1998) noted that athletic retirement was different from other retirements due to the unique characteristics and problems associated with the athletic identity, and the special circumstances of early and forced retirements. They found that the reason for retirement was significant in predicting

post-retirement adjustment. Those athletes who had control over the timing and circumstances of their retirement fared better than those who were forced to retire due to injury or deselection. Webb et al. found that adjustment problems were greatest for those who had retired due to injury, and that most of them regarded the injury as an unexpected or unforeseeable event. This again tends to indicate a present-centred focus and an unrealistic approach to future planning.

Other negative outcomes associated with forced retirement include loss of identity, lack of perceived control, financial issues, and loss of social support (Fortunato & Marchant, 1999). Whether retirement is forced or unforced, transition will also be more difficult for those who have not developed post-career transition plans.

### Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program

In response to these issues, the Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program was set up to provide an integrated program of support for Australia's elite athletes. The National ACE program was developed in 1994 and implemented in 1995. It operates in all states and territories and is available to all athletes on scholarship with the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) in Canberra and with all the various Academies or Institutes of Sport across Australia. Its strategies include individual athlete assessment; personal development training; career and education guidance, transition services; business, community, and education support; program development; and program integration.

In 2002, a research team at USQ was funded by the Australian Sports Commission to conduct a 5-year longitudinal study of the ACE program. A survey of athletes on scholarship was conducted at the beginning of each of the 5 years of the study. The final data collection for the project was completed earlier this year. The overall results indicated that athletes held the ACE program in very high regard with athletes reporting satisfaction levels of 81% in 2003 rising to 92% in 2007. They also indicated that they considered ACE services to be relevant, accessible, and available when they needed them. The study also showed that those athletes who used ACE services were more motivated to make career decisions. While as expected, all athletes who responded had high levels of athletic identity, it was encouraging to note that very few showed evidence of identity foreclosure as an athlete. Most were considering a range of post sporting career options. Female athletes were more motivated to make a career decision than were male athletes, and were less likely to display signs of identity foreclosure.

## Interviews

In addition to the surveys, interviews were also carried out at various stages during the project in order to add some qualitative data to the evaluation project, particularly relating to retirement/transition issues. The survey data had indicated that even though ACE provided transition services as part of its suite of programs and activities, there were a number of athletes who were not aware that these services were available. We decided to interview a number of athletes who were in the process of transitioning out of elite sport, in order to explore in more depth their decision-making process and adjustment issues, if any. Below is a summary of the responses of three elite netballers and a gymnast who had recently made the decision to retire from their sport.

### Reasons for Retiring

Two of the athletes had retired due to injury or physical deterioration, and one indicated that she had difficulty coming to terms with her enforced retirement.

*It wasn't actually a decision I made. I had to make it in the end, but I had advice from my surgeon. I had my sixth knee operation…. (I was) really disappointed because I had envisaged playing until I was about 30…(but I knew that after a 2 year break to recuperate) I wouldn't be as fast or as fit as I had been, at the age that I was.*

However, the enforced break due to injury made the final decision to retire easier for one.

*It was easy for me (to decide). I'd had a full knee reconstruction…and in that period of time I had off, I decided there was more to life.... I found other interests in my year off…and I sort of lost a bit of the passion... I really needed to make a decision to go ahead with my career or to stick with netball. And earning some money won out.*

In the case above, the decision was also made easier by the fact that the athlete was in the final year of her university degree, and had been offered a good job with a law firm.

The gymnast retired after failing to gain selection in the Olympic team. She has rekindled those hopes by changing to track and field. This decision to continue pursuing the dream indicates the powerful motivating influence of achieving sporting excellence *("the passion").*

*It was quite difficult (to decide) because you are always deciding whether or not you want to concentrate on your studies or other aspects of life…It's always in the back of your mind, and you never really think about going through with it. The injuries were the sign as well. But also people, family, even coaches suggesting that your body won't take it. (Not getting to the Olympics) was a disappointment, but I'm trying to get there in another way.*

This powerful drive to compete and perform was also evidenced in one of the netballers who said that she had retired a number of times, but always came back. The habit and social ties were too hard to break.

*I was supposed to play for Melbourne one year but didn't end up playing, so that was last year when I retired. I had also retired the season before that. I said I wasn't going to play. But then the team was*

*selected, they started training, just about all my friends, my flatmate was going to training, but I wasn't, and I thought "Oh, I'll just play".*

Only the gymnast reported any pressure from others in relation to their decision to retire.

*Different coaches have different ideas.*

One of the netballers summed up the majority view:

*I don't think anyone would have dared try to tell me not to. They know the response they would have got. So, no, it was solely my decision.*

## Ongoing Involvement in their Sport

Athletes showing identity foreclosure are likely to find it difficult to make the adjustment away from sport. For one of the athletes interviewed whose retirement had been imposed on medical grounds, her first reaction to a question about her ongoing involvement was to say that she wanted some time away from the sport.

*Because I was so disappointed to start with,…I just wanted a break from it. I really needed to get away from it to know where I wanted to head. Then just recently, a couple of weeks ago, I've just been appointed assistant coach to the (State team)…. I'm thrilled, and I'm happy that I'll be involved at a level that I've devoted so much time to.*

The athletes who had more control over their retirement were more open to ongoing participation, albeit at a lower level.

*I'm coaching a bit, but not at the same level. It's only recreational.*

## Positive Effect of Sport

All four athletes were readily able to identify many ways in which their sporting career had helped in their non-sporting career and with life in general. The ACE program offers advice on preparing resumes and job applications. The athletes indicated that they had consciously called upon the skills they acquired through sport in job interviews or in their work.

*So when they say (in an interview), 'When have you had to be a leader?' and you say, 'Well, I've been captain of the national netball team in Queensland for 3 years.' … It's really easy for me to come up with examples. I spent 2 years at AIS in Canberra, and you've just travelled all around the world with them, and you get those sort of experiences that a lot of people wouldn't have, and I think it makes you stand out in an interview process.*

*One thing I think especially playing in a team sport, it teaches you how to be a team member in many different environments, especially working environments. I'm a teacher now, and as a teacher, you're a team member. (Playing team sport) teaches you how to work with people. The biggest thing I find though is that it taught me time management. …Being an elite netballer, you don't get paid as a professional, although you train professional hours. So you have to work at least part time. I always worked full time during my playing career, so my time management had to be absolutely spot on, so I think that's one of the big things, especially being a teacher.*

*It also gives you confidence. It helps you to believe in your own ability. I think it had a really positive effect on me. It helps you set goals so that you can reach them."*

*"I think it gives you stronger will power. Yeah, I just think it prepares you for a harder life. I mean, you've already experienced it from a young age.*

## Negative Effect on Non-sporting Career

Despite the positives indicated above, all were also adamant that their sporting career had left them behind their non-sporting peers, both financially and career-wise. The circumstances of these four athletes are typical of the great majority of elite Australian athletes, but would of course differ from those who were able to glean larger financial rewards from their sport. Most had put their study or career on hold or had spread their career preparation over a longer period in order to fit them in with their sporting commitments.

*I think that sometimes you are limited in the career path that you can choose – just for that period of time. I mean, to play at the national level, you have to be able to travel. (I)f you don't have an employer who can give you that time off, then obviously they won't employ you. It might be the perfect job for you career-wise, but if they're not going to give you the time off, you obviously can't choose that direction.*

*I've spent the last five years with no money, because I couldn't have a job and play netball as well. I've done the full subject load every semester, but I finished later because I took 2 years off to go to the AIS.*

*I did one year of uni full time, and that was fine, and since then it's been disrupted, totally disrupted. …I've done some part time. I've done some full time. I've had some where I've done nothing in a semester. Netball has always been the top priority. ..I have failed a couple of subjects. One when I went to New Zealand, because I didn't go to a single lecture and came back and just failed. Financially I have close to nothing. I have more debt because I've been a student throughout most of my netball career, and I mean it takes up a lot of time. We train professionally. We put in as many hours as other professional sports do but we don't get the financial rewards.*

*If you stay in the sport longer, it could delay certain study. …You don't get a normal childhood. It definitely (had an impact on my studies). Like the grounding - I missed out on a lot of the early years of high school – a lot of key aspects, and you just have to jump that bit and get into the hard stuff.*

## Life after Sport

Each athlete listed a number of ways in which their life was different following their retirement from sport. Just as they were able to identify positive and negative impacts on their careers, they were also able to say ways in which their lives would be better as well as

reflecting on a number of things that they would miss. Generally, the positives were associated with no longer having to adhere to the strict constraints of their training and competition regimen.

*I have more time at home, which I really like. More time for myself. I mean I joined my own gym and I go to yoga and I do Pilates and that sort of stuff that I never did before. And I probably have dedicated a lot more time to my study. ...With my degree, your GPA determines whether you get Honours, so I've sort of had a few goals there that I've tried to achieve or am trying to achieve, and I've really focussed on that. I feel like I've been able to do a few things for myself. ...As much as I've gained from my sport, I did sacrifice a lot of my own time and freedom to participate.*

*Oh, a lot more laid back. You can do other stuff, have more of a social life just in general. You're not as tense. A lot of people have said I'm a lot happier.*

*My boyfriend, his family is from the country, and we'd like to occasionally say 'Well, let's go down to your parents' place for the weekend. Oh, I can't do that because of netball!' You know you can do pretty much anything you like after you've (retired). You have no commitments, you can live your life like a normal person, which is nice.*

The main thing that many of the athletes agreed that they would miss most was the camaraderie of being with their team mates.

*I did miss the girls. You're training with them every day. They become nearly your best friends, your family, so I miss that a lot. I miss catching up with the girls.*

*Oh certainly you miss the team aspect. I mean with the team, I was with the (state team) from 2000 until 2003, so four seasons, and my group of closest friends were also in the team. I mean they're my friends who are my closest friends regardless of whether we're playing netball or not. And certainly going away every weekend with them was always lots of fun and you do miss that.*

Other things that the athletes said they would miss included the physical activity and fitness, and being recognised and acknowledged for their performances.

*I think you get a thrill out of doing all the skills and stuff. They feel so scary, but you actually get a thrill out of it. (My classmates) were really excited. They always ask 'How are you going?' and 'I could never do it', they say. That was good. I miss that a bit.*

*I did miss the training though. Because when I had to do it, I did it. ...but when I didn't have them there, I'd say 'Oh, I don't have to do that.' And I suppose I lost my fitness quite easily.*

### Making the Transition

Those athletes who had already made the decision to retire had fewer difficulties making the transition. Emotionally and practically, they were prepared for the next phase of their life.

*It was very smooth. I think I'd made up my mind even before the end of the netball season that this was it for me. I think I probably made the decision that I didn't want any more. And then I was doing really well at uni and I got myself a job in a law firm and I was working one day a week, and I said, 'Hey, I need to focus on this. I'm going to be getting out in the workforce', so that was it.*

The transition was difficult if the athletes felt they did not feel in control of their decision or if they had unmet goals.

*I had retired. That was supposed to be for good. But then I got a really good offer from the Melbourne team, who had won the grand final for a couple of years in a row and they wanted me to come down, and I thought, you know, I was going to finish, not on a bad note, but I haven't ever won a premiership, I haven't even been in a very successful national team, and if these opportunities were presenting themselves, why don't I just take it, so I took it.*

### Ways in which ACE Helped

Most were aware that ACE services were available, and some had made good use of them. Most of the netballers said they did not really need assistance from ACE, as they knew that they had to develop their careers throughout their sporting careers.

*ACE were really good actually. If I ever needed help, I'd go to them. But I never really had many problems. ACE did contact me and say if I ever needed anything, they'd just be there. But I found that I was able to deal with it by myself.*

*I still see (one of the ACE Advisors). I see him often at the netball, and we have a chat, and he's great, and I knew I could ring him any time, ... but I really haven't had the need. It wasn't as though I had dedicated my whole life to my sport and it had ended and I thought 'Oh, what am I going to do now?' So there's a big overlap in my transition, and it just turned out really smoothly for me, so... But I knew that I could ring (ACE) if I needed them.*

*ACE was great down (at the AIS). Sorting out education, they were really good. Sometimes they make themselves available to be utilised, but we just don't use them. But I knew that anything like that, you could probably go and see them.*

While the four athletes whose views are presented in this report are not necessarily representative of other athletes, the issues they raised have many elements in common. However, it is acknowledged that there may be a number of other issues which may impact on the retirement experience of other elite athletes but which have not emerged in this group.

## Conclusions

All the athletes whose views are presented in this paper have had ACE services available to them. The low levels of identity foreclosure may at least in part be attributed to this program. All four have used at least some ACE services and while they generally reported that they did not need to access transition services, they were pleased to know that such services

were available should they need them. The main transition issues raised by these female athletes were needing to deal with changed priorities; not having the team as support and as motivators; feeling as though they were behind their peers – financially and career-wise; and not experiencing the thrill and satisfaction associated with "excellence".

The athletes reported satisfaction with the assistance provided by ACE. Practical assistance with "moving on" was available throughout the athlete's career by helping them focus on education and long-term career goals. The athletes also indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to "chat" or talk through some of the other issues and feelings that were associated with the transition period.

On balance, all four athletes agreed that they had benefited from their time in sport. While they had made many sacrifices, and had given up a lot of their personal freedom in order to participate, they could look back on their sporting career with satisfaction. Successful transition would ensure that they will look forward to the next phases of their life with a similar amount of positive emotion.

## References


Bracken, B. A. (1992). *Multidimensional self-concept scale*. Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Brewer, B. W., Selby, C. L., Britton, W., Linder, D. E., & Petitpas, A. J. (1999). Distancing oneself from a poor season: Divestment of athletic identity. *Journal of Personal and Interpersonal Loss, 4*(2), 149-162.

Brewer, B. W., Van Raalte, J. L., & Linder, D. E. (1993). Athletic identity: Hercules' muscle or Achilles Heel? *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 24*, 237-254.

Brown, C., Glastetter-Fender, C., & Shelton, M. (2000). Psychosocial identity and career control in college student-athletes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 56,* 53-62.

Brown, C. & Hartley, D. L. (1998). Athletic identity and career maturity of male college student athletes. *International Journal of Sport Psychology, 29,* 17-26.

Cantor, N., Markus, H., Niedenthal, P., & Nurius, P. (1986). On motivation and the self-concept. In R. M. Sorrentino & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition* (pp. 96-121). New York: Guilford Press.

Fortunato, V., & Marchant, D. (1999). Forced retirement from elite football in Australia. *Journal of Personal and Interpersonal Loss, 4*(3), 269-280.

Harter, S. (1996). Historical roots of contemporary issues involving self-concept. In B. A. Bracken (Ed.), *Handbook of self-concept* (pp. 1-37). New York: Wiley.

Kornspan, A. S., & Etzel, E. F., (2001). The relationship of demographic and psychological variables to career maturity of junior college student-athletes. *Journal of College Student Development, 42*(2), 122.

McPherson, B. D. (1980). Retirement from professional sport: The process and problems of occupational and psychological adjustment. *Sociological Symposium, 30,* 126-143.

Murphy, G. M., Petitpas, A. J., & Brewer, B. W. (1996). Identity foreclosure, athletic identity, and career maturity in intercollegiate athletes. *The Sport Psychologist, 10,* 239-246.

Webb, W. M., Nasco, S. A., Riley, S., & Headrick, B. (1998). Athlete identity and reactions to retirement from sports. *Journal of Sports Behavior, 21*(3), 338-352.

Weichman, S. A., & Williams, J. (1997). Relation of athletic identity to injury and mood disturbance. *Journal of Sport Behavior, 20*(2), 199-210.

# Fertility Futures: Implications of National, Pronatalist Policies for Adolescent Women in Australia

**Marilyn J. Anderson (marilyn.anderson@jcu.edu.au)**
Department of Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology
James Cook University, Smithfield, QLD 4879 Australia

**Abstract**

The Australian Federal Government has responded to the projected, adverse economic repercussions of an ageing population with pronatalist, family-friendly tax incentives, policy rhetoric, and a lump sum Baby Bonus[1]. Tangentially, amid circulation of birth-dearth predictions, the media is positioning fertility as a precious, personal asset not to be squandered. Women in Australia are being subjected to a synergism of new - or renewed - societal forces to "procreate and cherish" that may have unintended consequences on the most vulnerable: newly-pubescent, adolescent women[2].

## Introduction

As governments grapple with projections of plummeting populations, a phenomenon set to emerge without intervention within fifty years, each nation's total fertility rate (TFR) is becoming a 'Dow Jones' futures index of the viability of its economy. Demographers warn that decline of the future labour force and escalation of ageing populations will be immanent sources of deep strain on all global economies, both in the developed and developing worlds, unable to be addressed adequately by immigration. Just-in-time production takes on a new realm of meaning as birth-dearth predictions circulate. Paradoxically, while increasing rather than decreasing populations contribute to resource strain and ecological impacts, and with projections of the global population reaching nine billion inhabitants by 2030, Australia and other OECD nations are attempting to boost fertility in the interests of future economies.

How can these two sets of contradictory messages be reconciled? On the one hand, the world is already overpopulated, according to the ecologists (Huggins & Skandera, 2005), and on the other, the Federal Government is advocating that Australia needs more children. Thus, enhanced receptiveness to procreation must enter the collective consciousness, to change the hard-wired, over-population messages of the past forty years, and to push against ecological alarm, if the downward trend of fertility is to be steadied, if not reversed. For the TFR to increase from its present 1.83 to the (apparently[3]) preferable replacement level of 2.06, seduction of the national psyche to procreate is via the public purse. In tandem, the average age of a woman bearing her first child would need to decrease, because the older she is when her first child arrives, the less likely she will (be able to) have the all-important, third child who, demographers say, is 'the important child as far as fertility policy is concerned' (McDonald, 2002)[4]. Such societal messages will affect, indubitably, newly-pubescent females and their attitudes toward potentialising motherhood.

### Pronatalist rhetoric

Articulation of pronatalism began in Australia in 2001. Heard (2006) identifies its commencement as an almost buried aside in Prime Minister Howard's Federal Liberal Party campaign launch in October 2001, when he announced the First Child Tax Refund (the original baby bonus): 'assistance with family formation is very much in Australia's long term interests'. Since then, from Heard's timeline tracking of the development of pronatalism under Howard, the rhetoric of, first, gender equity theory and, then, preference theory surrounding the pronatalist agenda has softened the sensitive matters of the 'government-in-the-bedroom' and social engineering, so successfully that the carefully worded *Intergenerational Report,* released on the occasion of the Federal Budget 2002-03 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002), aroused no quarrel in the press. Phrases such as 'emerging issues associated with an ageing population', and 'fiscal outlook over the long term' were becoming more acceptable. Momentum gathered from the Federal Budget of July 2004 onward,

[1] The Baby Bonus payment for each newborn paid to the birth mother was introduced in July 2004 as $3000, increased to $4000 in July 2006, set to increase to $5000 in July 2008.

[2] Adolescents are taken to be 12 to 19 years-of-age, and the oxymoron of 'adolescent women' is deliberately chosen.

[3] See Huggins and Skandera (2005), *Population puzzle: Boom or bust?* for other demographic models and theory.

[4] Australia does not have a population or pronatalist policy, 'in the strict sense,' says McDonald (2003). Jackson (2006) says otherwise, that Australia has an 'explicit fertility policy in the form of a Maternity Payment.'

strengthened by the Federal Treasurer's oft-quoted exhortation, 'have one for your husband and one for your wife and one for the country'. In effect, Australians were being stimulated to reproduce with a sense of national pride, and being prepared to accept the new ideal: the three child family.

## Policies That Promote Birth Rate Increase

As has been established by research conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Weston, Qu, Parker, & Alexander, 2004), the majority of Australians aged 20-39 years, anticipating or already involved in parenthood, aspire to have three children, although, in reality, they are more likely to have two. For conditions for third-child aspirations to be realisable, the Federal Government needed new discussions with Australian families, to push against what Wattenberg (2004) dubs as a "near-Copernican shift" in procreation ideology. Governments seeking to break from over forty years of persistent alarm about overpopulation will encounter 'a very powerful set of objections' to policies that promote an increase in the birth rate (McDonald, 2006).

Thus, the pursuit of a long-range vision has been met with considerable resistance: in revising family tax benefits, the Australian Government has received criticism[5]; in repudiating universal, paid maternity leave, it has been found wanting[6]; and in attending to more childcare centre placements, although part way addressed, it has faced controversy[7]. The one "vote winner"[8] is a direct cash transfer to mothers of newborns, a "policy which scores highly. Because of its directness", McDonald (2006) believes, it "strongly affirms that society values children", not only financially but also symbolically. Yet this payment, too, carries a burden. Its utilitarianism may have unintended consequences: the powerful message being made by the Baby Bonus may be received by "the wrong people" (McDonald), which includes teenage girls internalising messages meant for their (much) older sisters.

## Importance of Age at First Childbearing

McDonald (2002) describes the psychological threshold of having the first child as the highest, because 'a high proportion of the indirect cost of having children comes with the first child'. The first child is, in terms of family, the most important movement over the threshold into the higher status of parenthood, and the motivator for a possible second. Australian family culture is less than enthusiastic about an only child, desiring the ideal of a sibling for the first child and, a further ideal, one of each sex (Kippen, Gray, & Evans, 2005). But it is the third child that most interests many demographers, with studies of third-child capacity especially prevalent in recent demographic literature (Hoem, Prskawetz, & Neyer, 2002). For families to have that third child, the decision invariably rests with female age at first childbirth.

Carmichael and McDonald (2003) offer a vital consideration: 'age at the commencement of child-bearing is a major determinant of ultimate family size'. Support for this position comes from an average-age-at-first-birth comparison: women born between 1908 and 1912 in Australia had their first birth, on average, at 26.4 years old; women born between 1933 and 1937 had an average age for first birth of 23.3 years old (the youngest of the century), a cohort which reached the highest completed fertility rate (3.0) for any cohort of the 20th century. That the peak in cohort fertility was achieved by the youngest-average-age-at-first-birth group 'is not without significance. This calculation supports an argument that age at the commencement of childbearing is a major determinant of ultimate family size' (Carmichael & McDonald). Rephrased, 'when women have their first child in their 30s, the time left to have other children is cut by half relative to those who had their first children in their 20s' (D'addio & d'Ercole, 2005). In other words, the earlier a woman has her first child, the more likely it is that she will go onto having not just a second, but possibly a third child.

How to address the threshold impediment successfully is integrated through two dimensions: the Howard Coalition Government's approach toward that 'barbecue stopper', the work/life balance and family-friendly policies (politically-canny speak for pronatalism), and the popular press. Fertility has been positioned more strenuously in the media recently, as a limited resource ebbing with (female) age, exhorted as a precious, personal asset not to be squandered. The hourglass with the sands of the fertility window trickling away replaces the biological clock ticking. A synergism of imperatives slides into position, resting roundly on women's shoulders: the earlier she has her

[5] The Howard Government 'has used the financial carrot of the Baby Bonus and Family Tax Benefit Part B to entice women from the workforce, and the financial stick of Family Benefit Part A and the Childcare Benefit (CCB) to penalise women who stay in full-time employment' (Summers, 2003).

[6] Then Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Tony Abbott, claimed that a compulsory, universal paid maternity leave system would be adopted 'over this government's dead body, frankly, it just won't happen under this Government' (Radio National, 2002).

[7] 'It's a myth child care is hard to find and too expensive, a new federal Treasury analysis says' (Colebatch, 2006).

[8] The Nicholson cartoon in *The Australian* on July 1, 2004 depicted Federal Treasurer Costello in a hospital bed, 'giving birth' to the Baby Bonus, with Prime Minister Howard's words as the caption, 'Congratulations! It's a vote winner!'

first babe, the more fortunate she will be, a misty message, indeed, for a newly-pubescent girl.

## A Particularly 'Wicked Problem'

Bridgman and Davis (2004) draw on the term "wicked problem", a 1973 coinage by Rittel and Weber, to describe "those issues that cannot be settled and will not go away … Much of social and economic policy is about managing (but not solving) wicked problems". Bridgman and Davis provide a synopsis of a particular - and particularly – "wicked problem":

> The federal government has been grappling with the complexities of what John Howard has called "the biggest social debate of our time". The objectives of the "work and family" policy package are to allow families to combine caring for children and paid work and, on a broader scale, to arrest the decline in Australia's birthrate … Both sides of politics acknowledge the complex nature of the problem … Work and family policy is an area in which clarity of objectives and confidence in policy instruments are hard to achieve.

Governments prefer incremental solutions, when an existing response to a problem is modified, thus saving an entire policy cycle and capitalising on previous work (Bridgman & Davis, 2004).

The Baby Bonus falls into this category. Introduced in 2001, the pre-existing baby bonus with its cumbersome conditions "was quietly abolished in the 2004 budget and replaced with a more generous maternity payment", observes Megalogenis (2007). "The baby bonus flopped", he adds, "because the stay-at-home mothers it was aimed at didn't exist in the numbers that Howard's advisors thought when the policy was being drawn up. The error rate was about 50 per cent." The revamped baby bonus in 2004 officially became the "maternity allowance" or, sometimes, the "newborn maternity payment" but, to add confusion, has since been popularly adopted in the capitalised form as the Baby Bonus, an incremental solution that masked a social policy mistake with recycled nomenclature.

## The Baby Bonus

In the package of Australia's pronatalist incentives to boost the TFR, the centrepiece is the Baby Bonus. The lump sum Baby Bonus, a procreation incentive that O'Donnell (2004) attributes to the "peculiar genius of Howard and Costello", and Megalogenis (2007) to the "Prime Minister's clairvoyant-like ability to pick which button to press on the electorate's cash register", is the only payment exactly of its kind. Paid directly to the mother for each newborn as a lump sum, unconditional payment, some commentators at the payment's inception questioned its intended effectiveness as incentive enough to have a baby. One was that "the Maternity Payment would have to be at least ten times higher before it would affect fertility rates" (Hakim, cited in Morehead, 2004). Another pundit dismissed the possibility that "teenage girls will have babies to claim the Maternity Payment", with some seeming relevance in the additional comment, that "only one hundred 14-year-olds had babies in 2002" (Arndt, cited in Morehead)[9].

Public alarm, however, sounded loudly over the potential creation of yet more welfare-dependent, single, teenage mothers, a less-than-desirable corollary of the new promotion of parenthood. Responding to a spate of anguish-laden newspaper articles following the 2004 budget release, Prime Minister Howard placated community angst over teenage girls who might be tempted to internalise messages meant for their older sisters (Maiden, 2004). Teen motherhood has been, after all, the lowest in Australia since first recorded by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 1921, peaking in 1971 at 55.5 live births per 1,000 females 15-19 (which includes births to mothers under 15 years), down to 16.3 per 1,000 in 2004. But the impact of the new population policy on adolescent women was not so blithely brushed to one side, at least not by Plumpton High School principal Glenn Sergeant, who reacted strongly: "You put $3000 in anybody's hands who's not used to having any money whatsoever … unfortunately it's enough money to induce some teenage girls to have a baby" (cited in Price, 2004)[10]. McDonald (2006) assesses that such "objections have faded with time", but with the Baby Bonus due to increase again to $5000 in 2008, and with the influences of pronatalism rippling through the nation, sociological impact studies are indicated.

Skepticism that such a payment could turn the heads of teenagers or anyone else toward (the contemplation of) parenthood is strong. Asks Heard (2006), "is there any theoretical and/or empirical basis for believing that a one-off payment can induce couples to consider an extra child or children?" Even Federal Treasurer Costello (2006), while taking credit for the Baby Bonus, his "little bit of labour" to help boost the TFR along with his advocacy to "procreate and cherish", at the same time contradicted himself: "nobody would get pregnant for a $4000 payment". Guest (2007) asks, "Do we need a pronatalist policy in Australia? Will the Baby Bonus raise fertility? Is the Baby Bonus a good

[9] In 2005, 374 Australian mothers were under 16, 902 aged 16, 1,947 aged 17, 2,993 aged 18 and 4,528 aged 19, a total of 10,744 or 4.15% of all births (ABS, 2006).

[10] Plumpton High School in Melbourne was one of the few secondary schools in Australia with a young parents' school program in Australia in 2004, a program for which Principal Sergeant received a Queen's Birthday Honour in 2004.

pronatalist policy?", and finds for the negative on each question amid pessimism about the Federal Coalition Government's dogmatic pursuit to increase the TFR. Yet the proposition that such a payment has considerable power, as much symbolic as financial, can be supported.

Firstly, in October 2006, controversy flared over unsubstantiated claims that "children are having children for the sake of the [Baby Bonus] payment" (Grace, 2006). A heated exchange in the press between politicians followed, resulting in a call to "increase scrutiny to stop baby bonus abuse" (Schubert, 2006). Response to this politically-sensitive issue came shortly after when Prime Minister Howard announced changes to the Baby Bonus payment conditions for mothers under 18 years old. His oblique rationale, that the decision was "common sense and [that] most of Australia would understand why we're doing it" (*The Australian*, November 13, 2006), produced another spate of headlines. No empirical evidence was offered, yet a conclusion can be drawn that the lump sum mode of delivery was influential and detrimental enough for some young women that a prime ministerial response to nip criticism and avert the potential of misuse was required. The Baby Bonus has a new, fixed age limit: from July 2007, under 18-year-old mothers receive their payment as 13 fortnightly payments (which was the case for under 16-year-old mothers all along, at the discretion of the Centrelink government case worker).

Secondly, McDonald (2006) cites early data from the Australian experience, that since the introduction of the Baby Bonus payment (and family tax incentives), 'in the first quarter in which births could have been affected by the new payment (June Quarter, 2005), there was an increase of 10 per cent in the number of births compared to the same quarter in the preceding year'. Jackson (2006) challenges such grandiose – and from her calculations, misleading – claims, and 'cautions against complacency that declining fertility has been permanently arrested'. As Couch, Dowsett, Dutertre, Keys, and Pitts (2006) acknowledge, 'few studies can 'prove' links between broad social and contextual factors [although] … there are studies that 'prove' some of the varied steps along the way", the province of sociologists and economists.

The third and most compelling consideration to mitigate the understandable skepticism that one-off payments can lead people into the long term commitment of parenting comes from Milligan (2005) who finds an economic relationship between pronatalist, financial incentives, and birth outcomes. He reviews impact studies of financial enticement on fertility across 28 of the 30 OECD countries providing some form of special social policy for families. Using Quebec as a case study, Milligan (2002, 2005) found a 25 per cent increase in fertility for families entitled to the full benefit. Further, Milligan calculates the cash payment scheme, then the equivalent of $A535 for the first child, (ultimately) $A1070 for the second, and $A8,550 for the third, as responsible for contributing 93,000 additional births to Quebec in the eight years of the scheme's existence. Schemes in other OECD countries, using what Demeny (2004) calls a "familiar armamentarium of pronatalist welfare State measures", include cash payments, mostly weighted as incentive for the all-important, third child, an expensive budget item if such payments are fallible, or even unnecessary, at least for Australia, as Guest (2007) surmises.

## Conclusion

Whether or not the Federal Government's package of pronatalist incentives do boost the TFR to a level commensurate with the projected needs of an ageing population, and, indeed, whether or not this is ultimately necessary, some (unintended) consequences are likely, particularly the favourable impression that young(er) motherhood has society's sanction. As McDonald and Kippen (2007) predict, "It may turn out that Australian women begin to have their children at somewhat younger ages than has been the case in the recent past". Cater and Coleman (2006), in their UK study of 'planned' teenage pregnancy, refer to "the seemingly rational and positive decision of choosing the new life-course of parenthood [that] … challenges the stereotypical viewpoint of teenage pregnancy as a solely negative life-choice". Pushing against the stereotype of the teenage, welfare mother, a new interpretation of mutual obligation[11] can be proposed: while the State may be supporting her, she is contributing to raising the TFR on two counts: for the first child who made her into a teenage mother, and for her positioning by merit of her young age to be able to have that third child. A lowering of the average age of first time motherhood in Australia is one possible legacy of utilitarian policy, but the more concerning legacy is the emergence of a cohort of mothers much younger than most would find acceptable.

*Marilyn Anderson's current research, The Amber Light Project, is the assessment of effects of pronatalist, national policies on adolescent women in Australia*

[11] Australia's Mutual Obligation policy, in place since 1998, requires anyone receiving income support over 18 to meet additional activity test requirements (Centrelink, 2007).

## References


Radio National. (2002, July 22). *Abbott embroiled in baby brawl*. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.abc.net.au/pm/stories/s613611.htm.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2006). *Births, Australia* 2005, cat. no. 3301.0. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Bridgman, P. & Davis, G. (2004). *The Australian policy handbook*, 3rd ed. NSW: Allen & Unwin.

Carmichael, G. A., & McDonald, P. (2003). Fertility trends and differentials. In S-E. Khoo & P. McDonald (Eds.), *The transformation of Australia's population: 1970-2030*. (pp. 40-76). Sydney: University of NSW Press.

Cater, S., & Coleman, L. (2006). *"Planned" teenage pregnancy: Perspectives of young parents from disadvantaged backgrounds*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Centrelink. (2007). *Options for your future – mutual obligation*. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.centrelink.gov.au

Colebatch, T. (2006, July 1). *A time for gain and pain*. The Age. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.theage.com.au/news/in-depth/a-time-for-gain-and-pain/2006/06/30/1151174391883.html

Commonwealth of Australia (2002). *Intergenerational Report 2002-03*, Budget Paper No. 5. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Costello, P. (2006, July 24). *Address to the National Press Club, Barton*. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.treasurer.gov.au/tsr/content/speeches/2006/014.asp

Couch, M., Dowsett. G. W., Dutertre, S., Keys, D., & Pitts, M. K. (2006). *Looking for more: A review of social and contextual factors affecting young people's sexual health*. Melbourne: La Trobe University.

Demeny, P. (2004). On policy responses to population decline. In United Nations, *Policy responses to population decline and ageing*. (pp. 450-458). New York: United Nations.

Grace, L. (2006, October 12). *Cobb demands proof of baby bonus claims*. Daily Liberal. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://dubbo.yourguide.com.au/detail.asp?class=news&subclass=general&story_id=516424&category=General&m=10&y=2006

Guest, R. (2007). The baby bonus: A dubious policy initiative. *Policy, 23*(1), 11-16.

Heard, G. (2006). Pronatalism under Howard. *People and Place*, *14*(3), 12-25.

Hoem, J., Prskawetz, A., & Neyer, G. (2002). Autonomy or conservative adjustment? The effect of public policies and educational attainment on third births in Austria, 1975-96. *Population Studies*, 55(3), 249-261.

Huggins L., & Skandera, H. (Eds.). (2005). *Population puzzle: Boom or bust?* Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press.

Jackson, N. (2006). When is a baby boom not a baby boom? Nine points of caution when interpreting fertility trends. *People and Place*, *14*(4), 1-13.

Kippen, R., Gray E., & Evans, A. (2005). The impact of Australian fertility of wanting one of each. *People and Place*, *13*(2), 12-20.

McDonald, P. (2002). Sustaining fertility through public policy: The range of options. *Population (English edition), 57*(3), 417-446.

McDonald, P. (2003) Australia's future population: population policy in a low-fertility society. In S-E. Khoo & P. McDonald (Eds.). *The Transformation of Australia's population: 1970-2030*. (pp. 266-280). Sydney: University of NSW Press.

McDonald, P. (2006). An assessment of policies that support having children from the perspectives of equity, efficiency and efficacy. In *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*. (pp. 213-234). Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press.

McDonald, P., & Kippen, R. (2007, June 28). Magic number may be a reality. *The Australian*. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21980634-5013169,00.html

Maiden, S. (2004, May 13). Teens not seduced by cash, says PM. *The Australian*, 5.

Megalogenis, G. (2007, February 26). Howard bribes don't always arrive on time. *The Australian*. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/printpage/0,5942,21286625,00.html

Milligan, K. (2002, January 24). Quebec's baby bonus: can public policy raise fertility? *Backgrounder*. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.cdhowe.org/pdf/Milligan_Backgrounder.pdf

Milligan, K. (2005). Subsidizing the stork: New evidence on tax incentives and fertility. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, *87*(3), 539-555.

Morehead, A. (2004). A review of new Australian Government initiatives for families with children. *Family Matters, 69*, 94-100.

O'Donnell, A. (2004). For love alone? Understanding Australia's declining birth rate requires more than simplistic generational generalizations. *Arena Magazine*, *71*, 9-11.

Price, R. (2004, May 26). *Lump sum baby payment could encourage teen pregnancies*. Retrieved August 21, 2005, from http://parinfoweb.aph.gov.au

Schubert, M. (2006, October 18). Increase scrutiny to stop baby bonus abuse: MP. *The Age*. Retrieved June 28, 2007, from http://www.theage.com.au/news/national/increase-scrutiny-to-stop-baby-bonus-abuse-mp/2006/10/17/1160850931612.html

Summers, A. (2003). *The end of equality: Work, babies and women's choices in 21st century Australia*. Milsons Point, NSW: Random House Australia.

Wattenberg, B. J. (2004). *Fewer: How the new demography of depopulation will shape our future*. Chicago: Ivan R Dee.

Weston, R., Qu, L., Parker, R. & Alexander, M. (2004). *"It's not for lack of wanting kids": A report on the fertility decision making project*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

# Women in the Frontline in Poverty Alleviation

**Anacoreta P. Arciaga (ana.arciaga@gmail.com)**
Livelihood and Enterprise Development Center Inc. Philippines

**Abstract**

Poverty has a gender dimension. In most countries, the poorest of the poor tend to be households headed by women. Three factors affect the "impovertisation" of women: (1) ***poverty of money***, which means lack of money to purchase the basic needs, (2) ***poverty of access***, which means lack of access to decent housing and settlements, education, health services and financial services which will help them create self-employment activities. (3) ***poverty of power***, in many Asian countries including the Philippines, both the formal and informal structures of government and the culture of governance tend to exclude the poor (especially women) from decision-making. In the Philippines, women play a big role in the socio-economic, survival and development of Filipino families. This paper will provide an understanding of how women participate in alleviation of poverty through participation in livelihood activities. Enhancing their skills through attendance to skills training and module on personality and business development workshops enhances the women's and their entire family's well-being. The study highlights the first-hand experiences of women who suffer extreme poverty, who were able to actively involve themselves in micro business planning and decision-making that ultimately helped their families and communities.

## Background of the Study

Women's rights around the world are important indicators of understanding global well-being. Many may think that women's rights are only an issue in countries where religion is law, such as many Muslim countries. Or even worse, some may think this is no longer an issue at all. The informal slogan of the Decade of Women became "Women do two-thirds of the world's work, receive 10 % of the world's income and own 1 % of the means of production." This paper presents the routes by which women creatively pull themselves up and their whole family from depressing economic condition. This study looks at on the most significant changes occurs to women's life and analyses the effects or impact of these to their well-being.

### Scope of the Study

This evaluation study was an attempt to explore and surface realities or impact of the program to the selected Livelihood and Enterprise Development Center (LEDC) partners to establish an empirical grounding to better understand whether the project has impacted among LEDC selected partners in Paliparan, Dasmarinas, Cavite Province. It did not aim to come up with results generalisable across population. Owing to time and resource constraints, this evaluation study limited its scope by just surfacing realities and accounts embedded in the stories and narratives told by selected LEDC partners whom the researchers conversed with.

### Evaluation Paradigm/framework

Unlike the conventional evaluation research that uses a structured framework, this study was framed up embracing the qualitative paradigm and the goal-free evaluation model. Specifically, the use of stories as a tool to elicit accounts/realities embedded in LEDC partners was employed. Using the goal-free evaluation model, this study focused on the outcomes and effects of the Microfinance Program and the quality of those effects. It measured the project success by determining actual effects of the project as constructed by the beneficiaries, the selected LEDC partners.

More so, in a goal-free evaluation model, program goals are not the criteria in which the evaluation is based. Instead, the evaluation examines how and what the program is doing to address needs in the partner's population. This evaluation model works best for qualitative evaluation because the evaluator is looking at actual effects rather than anticipated effects for which quantitative tools have been designed. The study focuses on actual rather than intended program outcomes. Using this tool, the evaluator has minimal contact with the organisation's staff thus increasing the likelihood that anticipated side effects will be noted (Fitzpatrick, 2004).

This study was conducted using participant-oriented approaches, in which the involvement of the participants are central in determining the values, criteria, needs, data, and conclusions of the evaluation (Affholter, 1994)

## Methodology

To gather partner's impact stories about the project, we employed the most significant change technique (MSC). Unlike the positivist approach, which makes use of quantitative indicators, this technique involves the regular collection of and participatory interpretation of "stories" about change (Dart & Davies, 2003). The important discourse in MSC is that researched communities are asked to describe what they consider to be the most significant changes they have experienced since they started working on a particular community development initiative, to explain why they think these changes are significant (or why they are of value), to explain how those

changes came about (including who was active in bringing about change), and to make decisions about how to continue with more activities that will be of value to their communities (Dart & Davies).

To facilitate the collection of stories, the researcher engaged in a group discussion with the partners who were the beneficiaries of the project. The researcher facilitated the discussion in a free-flowing manner. Sampling in qualitative research anyway does not concern much on the number of samples, but it concerns itself with information-richness.

## Results and Discussion

The following are excerpts of the discussion:

**Political Aspect** What do think are the changes in the decision-making process of the members through the project implementation of the LEDC Microfinance Project?

***Respondent 1.*** Translation: *A lot of changes happened to me in terms of the decision –making because of my attendance in the seminars given by LEDC. When I entered into business, I just imitate what my neighbours sell. Now, if I chose a new business I see to it that I do the research first.*

***Respondent 2.*** Translation: *The first thing that changed in my life was to be more aware that everyone should be open and willing to widen ones horizon. Because of this my views in life and to myself had also widened. In putting up a business, I realize that we should know how to scrutinize things and plan well so that we would not waste time and money.*

***Respondent 3.*** Translation: *I can only cite few important things that had changed when I joined LEDC—I know myself deeply and appreciated my skills, talents and knowledge. Knowing myself deeply I realized that I can uplift the living condition of my family and have better direction also in life.*

***Respondent 4.*** Translation: *I look at life as a cycle. I was born poor and I have been poor forever because I wasn't able to finish school. I saw how my neighbours manage their lives. Some of my friends encourage me join LEDC. I realized that when we open our minds and look at life positively, things will be put in proper perspectives.*

**Respondent 5.** Translation: *I am happy to be part of LEDC. When I decided to join LEDC and became an active member of the organization, everything changed for the better. I also learned that if you have faith in yourself, that you can do whatever dreams you have if really work for it.*

Are you involved in the project/business conceptualization up to the project evaluation and monitoring?

**Respondent 1.** Translation: *There is an orientation for all prospective partners. During the second meeting, we were taught on how to prepare our business plans and we became aware to monitor our business.*

**Respondent 2.** Translation:. *Every time we conducted meetings, the LEDC staff are provided information on how to plan our business and manage it properly.*

**Respondent 3.** Translation: *I am always part of the meeting and I do believe that I should be active in all of the activities to gain new knowledge and insights especially if it helps me and my family.*

**Respondent 4.** Translation: *I am always participating in all the activities my life as well as my family improved tremendously.*

**Respondent 5.** Translation: *I am happy ever since I joined in LEDC. I always attend the meeting because I learned a lot. They provide a lot of information on the business planning and management.*

**Social Aspect** Does the project train the partners to improve their social skills and well-being?

**Respondent 1.** Translation: *I had acquired additional knowledge through attendance to seminars. I also had an opportunity to save for myself. I became independent as well as I have better self-concept now.*

**Respondent 2.** Translation: *The program helped us a lot. It improved our economic lives and the whole being of family.*

**Respondent 3.** Translation: *I learned to manage my own business and I know now how to improve it. I was also able to extend assistance to my neighbour I was able to create jobs.*

**Respondent 4.** Translation: *The programs helped our family. I learned how to interact with different types of people and I can now provide things for my family. The most important change is in my belief in God. I am healthy to continue my mission in life.*

**Respondent 5.** Translation: *I gained self-confidence through my active participation in the seminars that LEDC provides. I gained new friends too.*

Where you able to share your learning to other partners or barangays (village)?

**Respondent 1.** Translation: *Yes. There are many out-of-youth who learned from helping in the business we set-up. Even their parents who do not have jobs are able to earn money because they sell many products. The business adds income to our families.*

**Respondent 2**. Translation: *As a partner, I was able to help my neighbours by providing them opportunities to earn by the products we sell. Our neighbours have been thankful because they cannot be employed regularly if I did not provide my neighbours the same opportunity.*

**Respondent 3.** Translation: *Yes, I shared my knowledge in sewing and my neighbour were able to get job.*

**Respondent 4**. Translation: *Yes, I helped my neighbours established their own small stores and I teach them how to improve and manage them properly.*

**Respondent 5.** Translation: *Yes, I shared my humble beginnings to them. I also teach them how to recycle products and maximise them to have better income.*

**Economic Aspect** How will you define your the life before you join the project. What economic status do you think belong?

**Respondent 1.** Translation: *I have a small accessories store. It is placed in a makeshift push cart made by my husband. My commodities are hair clips, fancy necklace and rings and other things that appeal to children and youth who are my frequent buyers.*

**Respondent 2.** Translation: *I am just a housewife. A very small general merchandise store with some bottles of soft drinks. Most of my income go to our ness cities. With the extra income I get to buy additional goods for the store.*

**Respondent 3.** Translation: *I am just a simple sewer that gets employment from my neighbour or nearby village. Because of meagre income of my husband, I really need to help him. While working irregularly, I really dreamed of establishing my own garment business.*

**Respondent 4.** Translation: *I am just a simple housewife. I know how to cook native delicacies. My husband's income is just enough for our family and sometimes cannot meet both ends meet from his income as construction worker.*

**Respondent 5.** Translation: *I worked as house help. I do everything a house help. I am single but I am extending assistance to my siblings who reside in the province. I provide financial support for the educational needs of some of my children's' relatives. Being an all around housemaid, I learned how to cook some dishes. In my days off, I get to cook food and sell it to my neighbour.*

How does the project helped change your economic life?

**Respondent 1**. Translation: *Ever since I joined LEDC in 2003, this has brought about a very big change in my life and my entire family's life. Aside from lending us small capital for our chosen business, I learned to manage the capital well and make it big. Through the seminars given by LEDC, I realized that there are a lot of strategies where a business could prosper. I can say that our levels of living increased. All of my children are enrolled in private schools. My eldest is now graduating student in college, the second child is in second year in college, and the third is graduating in elementary. Most importantly, I can buy the things my children needs, especially providing them good food to eat. We also improved our housing condition. We improved our business and we are to continuously save.*

**Respondent 2.** Translation: *I can say that, there are very big changes in my life ever sine I joined LEDC in 2003. From a very small general merchandise store with a two - thousand worth of goods, right now in my latest inventory of my grocery store have at least one hundred fifty thousand pesos worth of goods. Not included here is the" tricycle" that I purchased where I use in delivering orders from our small "sari-sari" stores. We were also able to construct a three-door apartment in one of out lots. This cost around five hundred thousand and I rent it for Two thousand pesos per apartment unit. Aside from that, I am also engaged in hog raising where I usually earned quite a lot. All of my children are enrolled in private schools. I also earned contacts and links in the business. Another accomplishment is that my husband no longer need to work outside the home. He now helps me manage our business. We are also able to help our neighbours. We employ them as my assistants and delivery personnel. One best thing is that, I learned how to save some of the earnings and appreciate the blessings of God.*

**Respondent 3.** Translation: *From a simple sewer, who irregularly got jobs from neighbour and nearby village, now I manage my own garment business where I employ six regular women sewers. We tie-up with schools for bulk orders of uniforms. After the school opening season, we shift from sewing curtains and bed sheets. which we sell to department stores here in Dasmarinas and in Manila. All of my children are enrolled in private school. Two are in college and the others are in high school. I am proud that we can provide their needs. As a woman and a mother, I do not need to go out of the house to seek for employment. I can perform my roles as a mother, wife and as an entrepreneur unlike before where I need to go out of the home and seek employment.*

**Respondent 4.** Translation: *I am now a full-pledged entrepreneur through my simple knowledge in cooking native delicacies. I was able to increase the One-thousand five hundred pesos starting loan capital to more or less Fifteen thousand pesos. That is a net income for two-week period. I have a direct twenty buyers/vendor and they repay my products in the afternoon or evening. This is on a daily and regular basis. Even when there is a typhoon or if we are in rainy season I receive orders. Because of the business, a construction worker does need to work in Manila and he became my business partner. Before joining the LEDC our house is made up of makeshift materials and there is no cement flooring. Now, we were able to construct a new bungalow house with three bedrooms. We have small nipa house at the back of our house, which serve us the cooking area for our product. We were also able to buy one additional lot where we recently constructed a two-door apartment. We rent it out for One thousand five hundred pesos per month. All of my children are enrolled and we can provide their needs. I could say that I am happy because we no longer need to seek work that far. Our work is right here in our backyard.*

**Respondent 5.** Translation: *Now, I do not need to work as housemaid, I am now the manager of my own business. I started selling and cooking viand and barbeque. I also opened a store selling grocery items. I am planning to construct my house this year and continuously extending assistance to the children of my other siblings in the province. My nephew and niece were able to finish their college degrees and are now extending help to their younger brothers and sisters.*

## Analysis of Results

UNICEF's main summary of equality in employment (Chapter 3) included the following points: For many

women, unpaid work in and for the household takes up the majority of their working hours, with much less time spent in remunerative employment. Even when they participate in the labour market for paid employment, women still undertake the majority of the housework.

When women work outside the household, they earn, on average, far less than men. They are also more likely to work in more precarious forms of employment with low earnings, little financial security and few or no social benefits. Women not only earn less than men but also tend to own fewer assets. Smaller salaries and less control over household income constrain their ability to accumulate capital. Gender biases in property and inheritance laws and in other channels of acquiring assets also leave women and children at greater risk of poverty.

Paid employment for women does not automatically lead to better outcomes for children. Factors such as the amount of time women spend working outside the household, the conditions under which they are employed and who controls the income they generate determine how the work undertaken by women in the labour market affects their own well-being and that of children (UNICEF, 2007).

The preliminary assessment, as it relates to the international reports on the status of women's employment proved that women, given enough resources and skills training, can have different directions to better their lives. With the five stories shared here, membership to LEDC program gave these women the chance to play dual roles as a home manager and entrepreneur.

Providing an opportunity to women to use their skills and talents and with a support services to development organizations as to provision of capital, will mean new employment, which will uphold their dignity. Being the manager of their own small businesses and being able to receive the fruits of their labour, they are not and could not be exploited in terms of remuneration.

Noting the contribution of women in the household needs in this particular study showed that women are able to uplift the living conditions of their families and even assist their husbands change work attitudes and careers as they both manage the home and business. Equality among genders can be seen and achieved if we provide better opportunity to families to embark on a small scale business than to think of providing employment in big companies where the families need to be separated in order to gain jobs.

As the researcher unveiled their stories, it was seen that the changes and enhancement of the living standards of these women and their families showed that the children get the benefit of good food, shelter and education. Also, partnerships were enhanced between husbands and wives in the management of the home. This is especially the case in parenting which oftentimes is just a burden for women.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

"Gender equality is not only morally right, it is pivotal to human progress and sustainable development. Achieving Millennium Development Goal Number 3—promoting gender equality and empowering women—will also contribute to achieving all the other goals, from reducing poverty and hunger to saving children's lives, improving maternal health, ensuring universal education, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and ensuring environmental sustainability." (UNICEF, 2007)

These stories provide the necessary mind-set for development agencies/organisations to look first on the assets and resources of the people no matter how poor they are, because they have the greatest resource—their positive attitudes towards life.

As shown in this study, women if given a chance and opportunity to improve their lives can be the best assets and vehicles to poverty alleviation, without neglecting their social functions as mothers and wives. Employment for women will not be a problem if they are given good support (both on skills enhancement and capital for their chosen businesses) from the private and public sectors. They can help ease problems of unemployment by creating jobs right in their villages or neighbourhoods.

Such opportunities increase awareness, knowledge and attitude (AKA) and skill levels of stakeholders/partners (women) through a more effective communication and extension strategies so that their capability for genuine participation is enhanced. They strengthen community organisations with a view to hastening the formation of effective participatory local institutions. They strengthen the capability of community organisations to mobilise resources to facilitate access to credit and capital, and their capability to link with training, research, and market institutions. They bank on the traits, skills and talents of women. Women can make a difference and they can help alleviate poverty and surely help improve the well-being of their children.

## References


Affholter, D.P. (1994). *Outcome monitoring*. In J.S. Wholey, H. P. Hartry, & K. E. Newcomer (Eds.), *Handbook of practical program evaluation*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Dart, J. & Davies, R. (2003). A dialogical, story-based evaluation tool: The most significant change technique. *American Journal of Evaluation, 24* (2), 137-155.

Fizpatrick, J. L. (2004). *Program evaluation: Alternative approaches and practical guidelines*, Boston: Pearson Education.

UNICEF. (2007). *State of the world's children, 2007*, p. 16 http://www.unescap.org/huset/hangzhou/urban_poverty.htm

# The Equity and Empowerment of Australian Indigenous Women Through Success In Education: Australia's Own Daughters Of The Dreaming

**Bronwyn Bethel (bbeth1@eq.edu.au)**
Teacher Coordinator RATEP
James Cook University, TNQTafe, Education Queensland, Australia

**Abstract**

This paper discusses the importance of education in the lives of Indigenous Australian women. Empowerment, whether it be personal, social or professional, can be sought through the attainment of education. As the traditional "gatherers" of food for survival, many Indigenous women now need to focus their energies upon the gathering of knowledge; indeed, this knowledge is as intrinsic to their survival as food once was. Knowledge carries the currency necessary to compete within the professional world as opposed to surviving on the fringes as was the case for 200 years after the arrival of Europeans. While the opportunity to be heard certainly needs to be in their own voice, it is equally imperative that the articulation of that voice be understood by their predominantly non-Indigenous audience. Indigenous women were relegated to both sexual and domestic enslavement, stolen from their families and silenced through the banishment of their native tongue. Whether known as the traditional gatherers, "Women of the Centre", "Women of the Sun", or "Daughters of the Dreaming", these women have proved pivotal in the survival of their people. This paper will discuss how their continued impact can be assured through the empowerment that education can bring to them.

## Introduction

As a non-Indigenous woman growing up in Queensland Australia in the 1960s I felt very cognisant of my 'lesser' status as a female. As a young girl with 3 brothers and an all round sports loving, beer toting Aussie bloke for a dad, it did not take too long before I realised that when my father wanted a drink at the pub with the boys after playing cricket all day, the fact that his wife and children were relegated to the car at the front of the pub until he was ready to grab his 'tallies' of beer and come home, was totally normal practice. This was necessary because of course women were not allowed inside of a hotel during this time. Now this is merely a small example of sexism in the memories of a then young white female, I can only but begin to wonder at the layers of oppression suffered by those who were not only 'inflicted' with the curse of femaleness but also had to suffer the indignity of black skin as well. For many Indigenous women, the entering of a hotel even in this new millennium, can be either forbidden or at the very least stigmatised.

It didn't take me too many years to understand that if I was to compete in this male dominated patriarchal society that I would have to fight for it as it was never going to be given lightly or handed over to me as an inherent human right. It was at this time I began to understand the empowerment that was incumbent with education. The awareness of my social oppression as a female sparked within me a genuine passion for social justice and further understanding of the added layers of oppression suffered by my Indigenous sisters. It is this passion that ultimately drove me toward Indigenous education and social access. Exclusion appeared to be the common denominator of oppression and therefore finding a means of culturally appropriate access that did not set Indigenous people up to fail became a driving passion. This opportunity for empowerment presented itself through the program I currently coordinate, namely Remote Area Teaching Education Program (RATEP).

The Indigenous cycle of oppression has been perpetuated throughout the generations of young Indigenous people by excluding their reality from the day to day realities of the school classroom.

Inequity and marginalisation are just two of the problems traditionally faced by Indigenous students and are at the core of poor Indigenous education outcomes. For this reason, inclusivity and the application of critical theory and critical pedagogy are highlighted as a means of redressing a history of exclusion and mistrust in the relationship between minority learners in Australia and formal education. Critical theory has an explicit interest in the abolition of social injustice (Bronner, 1993, p.2). Further, as Abby Wolk (2000) stated:

> …critical pedagogy challenges the notion that the world is what it is and can't be any different. It enables learners to reflect on their own experience historically, giving their immediate reality a beginning, a present, and most importantly, a future. (p.1)

The discussion draws upon a framework from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (2004) concept paper, *A Challenge and a Vision: Marginalisation a Threat to Society,* to examine RATEP as a professional education context to promote inclusion. In order to give you a context it is important to firstly give you a brief overview of the RATEP program. RATEP addresses the issue of role models

and acknowledges the vital role they play in the lives of young school children. Traditionally Indigenous children received the majority of their learning from the women who defined their existence - women such as their mother, sisters, grandmother and aunties. These women were the keepers of the much needed knowledge surrounding their culture, survival and kinship patterns etc, in other words those pieces of knowledge fundamental to survival and happiness. The decimation of traditional education through the imposed teachings of the Europeans signalled the coinciding decimation of the understood and desired learning process. It is now traditionally, classroom teachers who are seen as authority figures who are looked to for advice, guidance and learning by students who view them as what Vygotsky would refer to as 'significant others' – those upon whom young children depend for knowledge and growth (McInerney & McInerney, 2002).

More Indigenous teachers in the classrooms ensures a presence of Indigenous 'significant others' to help instil cultural diversity and inclusivity in the classroom culture. Inclusivity offers solutions to a myriad of poor education outcomes and RATEP helps address the issue by providing Indigenous teachers who have been empowered through exposure to philosophies such as critical theory and critical pedagogy as a means to affect inclusion in the classroom. At last a more consistent and recognized connectedness to their real world can be present for Indigenous students as opposed to the complete domination of a Caucasian worldview.

One of the key deterrents for Indigenous women training to become teachers in the past has been the need to move away from their community and kinship system and learn to thrive in an alienating and unsupportive environment. This deterrent has therefore culminated in a shameful lack of Indigenous role models in our classrooms - role models who prove to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students alike that the central position of power to teach and support belongs just as naturally to our Indigenous Australians as it does to our non-Indigenous.

This environment of inclusion begins with the RATEP site and then naturally flows on into the classroom of these RATEP teacher graduates. This dramatic change in the approach to, and the acceptance of, education is in part due to the implementation of critical theory.

## Critical Theory

Critical theory is a philosophy that emphasises the importance of questioning and challenging "the seeming obviousness, naturalness, immediacy, and simplicity of the world around us, and in particular, of what we are able to perceive through our senses and understand through the application of our powers of reason" (Nowlan, 2001, p.2). Critical theory helps challenge the *status quo* of poor Indigenous educational outcomes and thereby provides a venue for alternative thinking and outcomes. It encourages the student to question and challenge the social, racial and sexual oppression embedded in the education system and the very fibre of culture itself. As stated by Giroux: "The primary characteristic of this school of thought is that social theory, whether reflected to educational research, art, philosophy, literature, or business, should play a significant role in changing the world, not just recording information" (1999, p.1).

The opportunity for Indigenous teachers to challenge the *status quo* and to promote social change in the classroom, for example, may be an overt multicultural approach to the classroom environment and their approaches to the curriculum. Indigenous teachers can prepare alternative units of work that include Indigenous perspectives of history as a means of addressing ignorance and racism and of providing multiple perspectives. These Indigenous perspectives can help encourage the changing of students' viewpoints and combat the passivity commensurate with the acceptance of social norms. Encouraging students to be independently critical and to challenge these social norms is an imperative of critical theory. This approach also helps instil pride in black Australian history and, at the same time, helps make the curriculum relevant to Indigenous students.

Education that provides multiple perspectives also provides multiple choices for individuals in terms of their developing belief systems and this is arguably as pertinent to majorities as it is to minorities. For example, this would provide an invaluable opportunity for students to undertake a unit of work that examined the traditional roles of Indigenous women prior to European invasion. This is an area of knowledge that has the potential to evoke Indigenous pride and non-Indigenous awareness. As further stated by Kellner:

> A teacher's inclusion of multicultural pedagogy and an active engagement with diverse ethnic, racial, and national issues is critical to…social well-being…. Teachers must acknowledge uniqueness and difference as they also applaud similarity, for the strength of small communities and also society at large derives from celebrating our diversity. (p.1)

Critical Pedagogy flows naturally from the precepts of critical theory and therefore needs to be acknowledged. The adoption of critical pedagogy as an approach to educators' professional practice is a logical progression as it shares the same philosophical roots as critical theory.

RATEP provides an opportunity for its graduates to focus directly on its principles from a grass roots level in their pedagogical approach. For example, RATEP

participants are in a position to exercise critical perspectives which are signalled by Giroux as vital:

> …raise questions about the relationships between the margins and centers of power in schools and are concerned about how to provide a way of reading history as part of a larger project of reclaiming power and identity, particularly as these are shaped around the categories of race, gender, class, and ethnicity. (1999, p.1)

The presence of Indigenous women in the classroom helps to not only challenge the *status quo* but consequently displaces it with the new knowledge that must evolve from their sheer presence in this political moment of the classroom. These women are being seen in a centralised position of power as opposed to a marginalised position of silence and invisibility - a presence commonly only seen through the inappropriate and deceptive manipulation of the media's stereotyping.

**The Relevance of Inclusivity** There are positive implications when applying critical theory to the issue of inclusivity as a means of challenging the barriers to inclusive education, as its underpinning philosophy is intolerant of the principles that impede equity and access. Marginalisation is a very real problem in contemporary societies: As highlighted in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation:

One of the greatest problems facing the world today is the growing number of persons who are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their communities. Such a society is neither efficient nor safe (2004, p.3).

This was most certainly once the case for all Indigenous Australians who were placed on missions and imprisoned; they were punished for communicating in their own language and the decimation of their languages spelt the concurrent decimation of their lifestyles and cultures (Indigenous Law Resources: Reconciliation and Social Justice Library, 1992). Whilst Indigenous exclusion was once confined to the perimeters of Australia and was seen strictly as a domestic problem, we are now members of a global society that requires certain abilities and knowledge to be able to participate both personally and professionally - a continued marginalisation and oppression of a whole people ensures that participation cannot take place and therefore continued imprisonment and dependency are guaranteed - the prison walls of the mission may not be physically visible but are soundly in place just the same.

As stated in UNESCO's concept paper, "Regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all" (2004, p.5). RATEP epitomises this commitment to inclusive orientation through its unique approach to inclusivity by placing highly trained Indigenous teachers in schools to affect inclusivity from within the education system. Education also provides the key for social access and engagement. It fulfils UNESCO's definition of an effective educational policy, it states, "Any educational policy must be able to meet the challenges of pluralism and enable everyone to find their place in the community to which they primarily belong and at the same time be given the means to open up to other communities" (2004, p.5).

Whilst RATEP focuses on educating adults, it equips those adults to go into the education system and have invaluable impact upon Indigenous and non-Indigenous children, with the hope that it will go full circle and break the cyclical pattern of poor Indigenous education outcomes.

The essential area of role modelling is addressed as Indigenous teachers are placed in the classrooms of young children. Positions of authority are indeed available to Indigenous peoples the missing ingredient has been primarily the belief that they exist. Self-belief and confidence are intrinsic contributing factors of success. Indigenous education has traditionally been a problem of seemingly insolvable complexity within Australian schools, much of which stems from a lack of student attendance (Bourke, Rigby, & Burden, 2000). Many 'responses' have been put in place over the years as a means of addressing the problem but to date have enjoyed very little success. RATEP, on the other hand, has seen positive innovations with the provision of role models for young Indigenous students and has transformed the approach to inclusivity within the schools that have RATEP teachers. It is intended that graduates of the program will bring with them to the schools an in-depth knowledge of the cultural, linguistic and family backgrounds of the children they and their colleagues will be teaching. Suddenly school need not be this alienating and irrelevant place that other generations were forced to attend and endure. The social currency provided by schools can now also provide authentic social currency for Indigenous learners.

Addressing the issue of inclusivity from within the education system itself is a transformational approach. Inclusive teaching practices recognise the relevance and importance of the individual student within the classroom, the uniqueness of their position and the impact of their culture. As stated by Wolk, "when we deny the central place of students actual life experiences, we miss the opportunity for an authentic context for learning, and set ourselves up for a lot of resistance" (2000, p.1). The recognition of difference and the ability to embrace the rich diversity that can grow from its acknowledgement can likewise add a rich

diversity to the classroom that benefits all those who are fortunate enough to share their experiences and ideally form a sense of group identity in the process.

**Awareness of Access** The barriers that have traditionally been formed by issues such as difference of gender, culture and race form only part of the complex dilemma that stands in the way of access and equity. In analysing the barriers to learning, UNESCO's paper distinguishes "learners who have historically faced barriers to learning have had few opportunities for further education at the tertiary level" (2004, p.10). This separates RATEP from other Indigenous programs as it functions from within a mainstream university. Lack of tertiary access has indeed contributed significantly to poor Indigenous education outcomes and places further emphasis on the value of RATEP. The ultimate indicator of RATEP's success, however, will rest with its existence no longer being necessary. This will be apparent once there are enough Indigenous teachers within Australian schools to implement inclusivity and impact upon the ambitions and self esteem of Indigenous students. These students will see first hand and therefore believe implicitly that positions of authority are available to them making segregated programs that endeavour to instil those very beliefs redundant).

Another barrier is that of attitudes. Negative attitudes are identified as a further barrier to learning. They have contributed to the continuation of negativity that surrounds the perceptions of education held by many Indigenous peoples. There are many Indigenous parents who, in some instances, have such appalling memories of school and the discrimination overtly displayed towards them, that they don't enforce the school attendance of their own children. This cycle of negativity from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples has to be broken and by making school a more positive experience through inclusive practices such as role modelling with Indigenous teachers, the cycle can indeed be broken. UNESCO points out the inadequate and fragmented human resource development that contributes to marginalisation and of course this is perpetuated through the lack of cross-cultural communication and awareness training offered in our schools.

This logically leads to the next point of cultural awareness. Some teachers may be culturally unaware and ill equipped to work in multicultural teaching contexts. Critical pedagogy can impact greatly upon the liabilities of a cultural morass, as highlighted further by Darder, 'a critical pedagogy must seriously address the concept of cultural politics by both legitimising and challenging cultural experiences that comprise the histories and social realities that in turn comprise the forms and boundaries that give meaning to student lives (1991, p.77). More Indigenous teachers having a presence in our schools provide a means of addressing the lack of awareness of Indigenous culture. As highlighted in the UNESCO paper, the curriculum itself might also be degrading (2004). This of course has been one of the major issues for Indigenous students who have been educated with the negative and degrading representations of early Aborigines in particular. The image of the Aborigine standing on one foot holding his spear and wearing a lap lap is one of the most prominent representations in earlier Australian history books. This depiction is very degrading and promotes the Aborigine as a nomad – a person who 'roams aimlessly' – this could not be further from the true essence of Indigenous seasonal travel patterns. These are just some of the issues that can be addressed to overturn the historically degrading representations. Kellner discusses the need for making "teachers and students sensitive to the politics of representation, to how media audiences' images of race, gender, sexuality, and cultural differences are in part generated by cultural representations, how negative stereotyping presents harmful cultural images and the need for a diversity of representations…" (1997, p. 2).

**Barriers of Language** The issue of language in education is a very real problem for many Indigenous Australians. As the UNESCO paper states, "In many countries the language of instruction is different than the language the students talk at home and use in their community thus creating difficulties in understanding for many students" (2004, p.18). RATEP graduates have provided a solution to this problem in the communities where they are now teaching. Indigenous people had their language stolen from them as the most expedient and dramatic means of both silencing and controlling them. Women of various cultures throughout history have been commonly silenced and oppressed through a lack of social and educational access, but surely the most profound form of oppression is the silence that emanates through the lack of an actual language. Now these women as teachers and centralised figures of authority, have found their voice through the medium of education and are now able to share that voice as a means of having their presence both felt and heard - a truly life changing achievement that can have an infinite and perpetual impact.

**Training of Personnel** The same UNESCO paper (2001) highlights the importance of training education personnel and equipping them with the skills for working in inclusive settings. RATEP addresses this issue directly by virtue of its clientele who are all Indigenous. These pre-service teachers also provide a valuable source of cultural inclusion and awareness when completing their practicums with non-Indigenous teachers – it becomes a mutual learning experience. As the numbers of Indigenous teachers increase,

ultimately, so might the impact on the views and attitudes of teachers who have not had the opportunity to be exposed to Indigenous culture. This may in turn give insights and further understanding of some of the problems experienced with Indigenous students. Any exposure to cultural difference must surely be an asset and a starting place for overcoming racial and cultural ignorance.

## Conclusion

One of the most significant aspects of RATEP is its long-term approach to poor Indigenous education outcomes. The RATEP model is not simply another 'bandaid' used to cover the infestations that culminate from Indigenous neglect but is an authentic remedy that attacks the core of the problem – it helps dislodge the roots of ignorance and pave the way for inclusivity with educated, knowledgeable and proud black role models; Indigenous teachers for now and the future. Education is at the grass roots of escaping oppression and marginalisation as it empowers the individual with the knowledge to function from within mainstream society and not 'dwell on the fringes' as mere spectators. Knowledge is indeed power and the knowledge gained by these Indigenous women in their challenge of the status quo empowers them to impact change on the belief systems of the students they will teach in future years. As poignantly stated by Nowlan (2001, p.2):

"…education in critical theory enables the development and refinement of our ability to engage as *critical citizens***,** that is as empowered agents able effectively to question, challenge, and contribute toward the progressive transformation of the prevailing status quo within the communities, societies, and cultures that we work to help maintain and reproduce every day, and in relation to which we are, as such always not only inescapably interested – but also vitally important – participants".

Once Indigenous peoples are participants of society they are no longer marginalised but function instead as mainstream members of a community. These people were once silenced through the stealth of their language - this lack of language spelt the lack of social access to survive as part of the mainstream social hub - this left nowhere to dwell but on the fringes, never really being able to physically access the prosperity that sat so tantalisingly in clear view of those forced to survive on the periphery of genuine access. This exclusion acts as a daily reminder of what is available to the 'Other' - the 'Other' being anyone other than those forced to survive and dwell on the fringe of society. It is through the reclaiming of their voice via education that social access can no longer be denied - education becomes the key necessary for opening their doors of desire and hope. Here's hoping that with enough determination and the empowerment that is afforded by education, that the Indigenous women of our country - 'our daughters of the dreaming', will never be oppressed through silence again.

I would just like to finish with the poignantly profound and beautiful words of Swami Sivananda who said: The best thing to give

> Your enemy is forgiveness;
> To an opponent, tolerance;
> To a friend, your heart;
> To your child, a good example;
> To your father, deference;
> To your mother, conduct that will make her proud of you;
> To yourself, respect;
> To all peoples, kindness
> (Dyer, 2004, p.123)

## References


Bronner, S. (1993). *Of critical theory and its theorists: Introduction*. Retrieved 20/12/2005 from http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/bron1.htm

Dyer, W. (1992). *Real magic: Creating miracles in everyday life,* Sydney: Harper Collins.

Giroux, H. (1999). *Rage and hope: What is critical pedagogy?* Retrieved 20/12/2005. http://www.perfectfit.org/CT/giroux2.html

Indigenous Law Resources, http://austlii.law.uts.edu.au/au/other/IndigLRes/car/1993/4/10.html

Kellner, D. (1997). *Media literacies and critical pedagogy in a multicultural society.* Retrieved 31/01/2006 from http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/courses/ed253a/newDK/medlit.htm

McInerney, D., & McInerney, V. (2002). *Educational psychology: Constructing learning.* Sydney: Prentice Hall.

Nowlan, B. (2001). *What is critical theory and why study it?* Retrieved 26/09/2005 from http://www.uwec.edu/ranowlan/intr_whystudy_crit_thy.htm

UNESCO. (2001). Including the Excluded: Meeting diversity in education. Example from Romania. Paris: UNESCO. Retrieved 26/09/2005 fromhttp://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001231/123165ea.pdf

UNESCO. (2004). Retrieved 26/09/2005 from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID+10295&URL_DO=DO_PRINTAGE

UNESCO. (2004). *A Challenge and a vision: Marginalisation a threat to society*. Retrieved 26/09/2005 from http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.HTML

Wolk, A. (2000). *Social Action and Critical Pedagogy*. Retrieved 31/01/2006 from http://www.allkidsgrieve.org/Classroom/class4.html

# Intergenerational Family Communication about Mammography

**Jessica L. Browne (jlb96@uow.edu.au)**
**Amy Y. C. Chan (amychan@uow.edu.au)**
School of Psychology
University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia

**Abstract**

In Australia, almost 50% of target women (aged between 50-69 years) do not adhere to the breast screening guidelines that make early detection possible. This study explores the efficacy of everyday family communication as a mode of mammography promotion to target women. Upward communication (communication from the younger generations up to the older generations) was the focus of this study. Young women (mean age = 21;05, *N* = 60) participated in a two-stage questionnaire study. During Stage One they reported their family history of breast cancer and any previous conversations they had with an older female family member about mammography. Intention to engage in a future conversation about mammography with a female relative was measured, and participants were encouraged to initiate such a conversation in the future. At Stage Two, participants reported whether or not they had initiated a conversation, and their perceived outcome of the conversation. Although initial intention scores were high, only 35% initiated a conversation. Intention was the only independent variable that significantly predicted behaviour. However, intentions best predicted the behaviour of those that failed to initiate a conversation. Perceived outcomes of the conversation included the female relative being more likely to have a mammogram, and the participant being more likely to seek further information about mammography. These results suggest that intergenerational family communication about mammography is a viable promotion tool, but young women may require additional support to convert intention into behaviour.

## Breast Cancer in Australia

Breast cancer in Australia has a rising incidence rate. Currently, one in 11 women is diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime, with women over 50 years of age accounting for over 70% of cases (AIHW, 2006). Although breast cancer remains the cause of the largest number of cancer-related deaths amongst Australian women, the mortality rate is actually declining. This is partially attributable to early detection through regular mammographic screening of asymptomatic women (Klemi et al., 2003). BreastScreen Australia offers free screening mammograms, and actively recruits target women (aged between 50-69) on a regular basis (recommended timeframe is every 2 years). Consistently, women express clear positive attitudes towards mammography, such as a belief in the efficacy of early detection and prevention of death (e.g., Nekhlyudov, Ross-Dengan, & Fletcher, 2003), yet only 56% of target women in Australia adhere to breast screening guidelines (AIHW, 2006). Increasing the adherence rate will also increase chances of survival, and thus promoting screening mammography to target women is clearly a priority.

## Family Communication

As preventive health becomes a priority on the research agenda (particularly with regards to breast cancer, see Dean, 2002), the potential role of social support and interpersonal influences in promoting healthy behaviour has been given some attention (Nollen, Catley, Davies, Hall, & Ahluwalia, 2004; Eng, 1993). This paper focuses on family communication as a vehicle for health promotion. More specifically, the focus is on intergenerational family communication between female relatives in order to promote mammography to target women.

There is some dialogue in the literature about the role of family communication in relation to a variety of health issues such as breastfeeding of infants (e.g., Rempel & Rempel, 2004), teenage sexuality and safe sex practices (e.g., Furstenburg, Herceg-Baron, Shea, & Webb, 1984), organ donation (e.g., Morgan, 2005), and genetic counselling and risk (see Wilson et al., 2004 for a review of this area). The emphasis here is on how communication between family members impacts on decision-making and health behaviour.

Traditionally, family communication research across all domains has focussed almost exclusively on 'downward' communication, that is, communication and its effects down through the generations (e.g., Chaffee, McLeod, & Atkin, 1971). Our understanding about 'upward' family communication (communication originating from the younger generations aimed up at the older generations) and its effects is significantly lacking, and in recent years some researchers (e.g., Kunkel, Hummert, & Dennis, 2006; Saphir & Chaffee, 2002) have begun to articulate and address this deficiency. Of particular interest to the current study is the potential effect of upward communication on the older generation, and whether this communication medium could be utilised as a vehicle for health promotion.

This study is a preliminary exploration of the efficacy of an upward family communication intervention to promote mammography to target women. Adult daughters of target women may be influential vehicles

for promotion of this crucial secondary preventive health behaviour.

## Predictors of Future Behaviour

In order to effectively promote a specific behaviour (in this case, initiating a conversation about mammography), it is important to understand what factors are facilitators or predictors of behavioural performance. This study explores the predictive power of three primary variables: intention to perform the behaviour, past behaviour, and family history of breast cancer.

Intention indicates a person's motivational orientation towards the behaviour, and is seen to gauge how much effort they are willing to put in to performing the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Orbell, Hodgkins, & Sheeran, 1997). The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB, Ajzen, 1985) identifies intention as the only independent predictor of actual behavioural performance. The effects of other TPB variables (perceived norms, perceived behavioural control, and attitude towards the behaviour) are thought to be mediated by intention. Evidence from meta-analytic reviews supports this notion, with intention accounting for 20-30% of variance in behaviour (e.g., Conner & Armitage, 1998; Sheeran & Orbell, 1998).

Past behaviour may be the only variable that contends the predictive power of intentions. Quine, Rutter, and Arnold (1998) found that past behaviour was the strongest independent predictor of helmet usage when bicycle riding, and comparable results were also found by O'Callaghan and Nausbaum (2006) in relation to the same behaviour. Further, Godin, Valois, and Lepage (1993) found that past behaviour in the form of habit was a superior predictor of physical exercise when compared to all TPB variables. However, Conner and McMillan (1999) found that while past behaviour is an independent predictor of intention, it failed to independently predict behaviour (cannabis use). Given the inconsistent evidence, the relative predictive power of intention and past behaviour deserves further attention. Hence we included both variables in the current study.

It is conceivable that a family history of breast cancer could be a strong influencing factor for a young woman deciding whether or not to initiate conversations about mammography with an older female family member. Again, the relative predictive power as compared to intention is important. Past behaviour and family history are stable variables that will remain uninfluenced by a health promotion intervention. Intention on the other hand is dynamic, increasing and decreasing in response to other variables, and thus may be susceptible to targeted health promotions (Fishbein et al., 2001). Family history of breast cancer was included as a third independent variable in the current study, in order to determine whether this too was an independent predictor.

The primary purpose of the current study was to begin testing the efficacy of an upward family communication intervention to promote mammography by exploring young women's willingness to engage in such a conversation, and the perceived outcomes of the conversation. A secondary aim was to establish the relative predictive power of intention, past behaviour, and breast cancer family history.

## Method

### Subjects

Participants in this two-stage study (N=60) were female undergraduate students who participated either for course credit or small incentives (coffee vouchers and $5 department store vouchers). All participants were of non-screening age (18-39 years, M = 21;05).

### Materials

**Stage 1 Questionnaire** This questionnaire contained a short information paragraph about mammography and what the target age range is for women to be screened. Participants were then asked to report whether they had previously engaged in any previous conversations about mammography with an older female family member (several times, once, never, unsure), and whether they had a family history of breast cancer (no history, immediate family, extended family, unsure). Intention to initiate a future conversation about mammography with an older female family member was measured using three items, with responses measured on a 7-point Likert scale: 'I will try to have a conversation about mammography with my older female family member in the next 2 months' *(definitely true-definitely false),* 'I intend to initiate a conversation with my older female family member about mammography within the next 2 months' *(very unlikely-very likely*), 'I plan to have a conversation about mammography with my older female family member in the next 2 months' *(very unlikely-very likely).* Items were based on previously used scales (e.g. Orbell, Hodgkins, & Sheeran, 1997; Sheeran & Orbell, 2000). The questionnaire concluded by encouraging participants to consider initiating a conversation about mammography with their nominated older female family member.

**Stage 2 Questionnaire** This questionnaire asked participants to report whether or not they initiated a conversation about mammography with an older female family member after participating in Stage 1. For those who had, they were then asked to specify any perceived outcomes or consequences of the conversation. A list of 10 potential outcomes was provided, and participants were advised to select all applicable responses and were also given the opportunity to specify additional perceived outcomes that were not mentioned in the list.

**Demographic Details Form** Participants completed a short demographic form at Stage 1 that included details such as age, household income, and education level.

## Procedure

**Stage 1** Participants were tested up to 10 at a time in a classroom setting. After generating a unique participant code to ensure anonymity of the data, participants completed the Stage 1 questionnaire. This was followed by two other tasks (another questionnaire and a computer task) that were part of a different study. The participants' final task was to complete the demographic details form, and at the conclusion of this stage they were reminded they would be contacted via email to return for Stage 2.

**Stage 2** Stage 2 occurred six to eight weeks after Stage 1 in a small group setting, (maximum four participants at a time). Participants completed the Stage 2 questionnaire, which was followed by a debriefing and provision of two copies (one each for themselves and their conversation partner) of a mammography brochure issued by BreastScreen NSW.

# Results

Fifty-six participants returned for Stage 2, and all following analyses are performed on this smaller sample. From this final sample, 35.7% (N = 20) reported that they did initiate a conversation with an older female family member about mammography after participating in Stage 1.

Intention scores ranged from 3 to 21 with a mean of 11.85. A median split was performed on the scores, and participants with a score of 12 or higher were categorised as 'preintenders' (N = 32), meaning that at Stage 1 they indicated high levels of intention to initiate a conversation about mammography with an older female family member. These figures on Stage 1 intention scores indicate a high level of willingness of participants to consider initiating a conversation about mammography with an older female family member.

A Chi-square test indicated a significant relationship between preintender status and behavioural performance (initiation of a conversation), $\chi^2(1) = 6.64$, $p = .01$. Of all preintenders, 50% initiated a conversation about mammography. Of the preintenders, 83.3% did not initiate a conversation. Preintention status predicted failure to initiate a conversation better than it predicted behavioural performance. Note that of those who initiated a conversation, 80% were pre-intenders, which further indicates that it was uncommon for those with low intention scores at Stage 1 to initiate a conversation with an older female family member.

Due to the dichotomous nature of the outcome variable (yes/no), a logistic regression procedure was used for further analysis of the data. Initiation of a conversation was regressed on a model comprising the independent variables: previous behaviour, family history, and pre-intender status. The -2 log-likelihood value of the constant-only model was 73.00, as compared to the -2 log-likelihood value of 64.04 when the independent variables were entered in the model, which was a significant reduction, $\chi^2(3) = 8.96$, $p < .03$. The model that took previous behaviour, family history and intention into account was significantly better at predicting conversation than a constant-only model. Preintender status was the only significant independent predictor of behaviour (initiation of a conversation), $\beta = 2.08$, $p = .01$. Previous behaviour ($\beta = .05$, $p = .90$) and family history ($\beta = -.00$, $p = .99$) did not independently predict behaviour.

Eighteen out of the 20 participants who initiated a conversation reported at least 1 positive outcome. The perceived outcomes reported with the highest frequency were an increased likelihood that the older female family member will now have a mammogram (N = 10), an increased likelihood that the participant will seek out more information about mammography (N = 10), and the participant becoming more aware about the importance of mammography (N = 9). Just 2 participants reported that there was no apparent outcome or consequence to their conversation. No negative outcomes were reported, though 1 participant indicated that they had become more aware of both the importance and the disadvantages of mammography. Notably, 1 participant reported that her mother had booked in for a mammogram as a result of the conversation, and 2 reported that the conversation served as a reminder for their mothers that they were due for a mammogram.

# Discussion

Upward family communication as a mammography promotion strategy is an approach worth developing. More than half the sample reported high levels of intention to initiate a conversation about mammography with an older female family member, indicating a willingness to participate in this intervention strategy. Young women reported remarkably positive outcomes as a result of initiating such a conversation, which further validates this proposed medium as a feasible mammography promotion strategy. The reported outcomes were both changes in knowledge and attitude (awareness), and behavioural changes (e.g. booking in for a mammogram, a desire to seek out more information about mammography). Based on what is known about the influence of the TPB variables and past behaviour on intention (e.g., Sheeran, Conner, & Norman, 2001; Symonds Downs, Graham, Yang, Bargainnier, & Vasil, 2006), it is feasible that these outcomes will positively impact on levels of intention, which in turn will make future behavioural performance more likely.

In the current study, intention was the only independent predictor of behavioural outcome. Past behaviour and family history both failed to independently predict whether or not young women would initiate a conversation about mammography with a female family member. It is conceivable that sample characteristics, such as a relatively small number of

participants who reported past behaviour (N = 24) may have impacted this result. However, these results are consistent with both the TPB, which posits that intention is the only independent predictor of volitional behaviour, and the results of Conner and McMillan (1999) who found that intention independently predicted behaviour, while past behaviour did not.

From an intervention perspective, these results are encouraging. If past behaviour or family history were the strongest independent predictors, the possibilities for effective intervention strategies are limited. No amount of health education, empowerment, or personal influence can modify an individual's family history or their behaviour prior to intervention. However, intention is susceptible to influence from other variables, in particular those addressed in the TPB. Our data indicate that intention is an independent predictor of initiation of a conversation about mammography, and thus targeted interventions can serve to increase levels of intention, and therefore increase the likelihood of behavioural performance. Given that the modifiable belief and attitudinal variables of the TPB can account for up to 40% of the variation in intention (Godin & Kok, 1996), interventions should be directed towards positively impacting perceived behavioural control, perceived norms, and attitudes towards the behaviour.

Intention is the most robust predictor of behaviour, though naturally, intention does not perfectly translate into behaviour. More than half of the sample initially reported high levels of intention to initiate a conversation with an older female family member about mammography, yet only 50% of these preintenders translated their intention into action. Intention predicted failure to act more accurately than it predicted behavioural performance: participants who initially reported low levels of intention rarely initiated a conversation about mammography between Stage 1 and 2.

It has been found that forming *implementation intentions* (plans that specify how, where and when a goal-directed behaviour will be implemented) increase the conversion of intention into behaviour, as a specified context and course of action is decided upon, and the contextual cues will automatically elicit the goal directed behaviour (Gollwitzer, 1993). Gollwitzer and his colleagues have provided extensive experimental support for this general proposition, (e.g., Gollwitzer, 1993; Brandstatter, Lengfelder, & Gollwitzer, 2001), and more recently implementation intentions have been applied as a supplement to the TPB when predicting and measuring health behaviour (e.g. Brickell, Chatzisarantis, & Pretty, 2006; Steadmane & Quine, 2004). Future research into upward family communication as a mammography promotion medium may benefit from the inclusion of an implementation intention intervention to increase conversion of intention into behaviour.

The results of this study indicate that upward family communication is a viable medium for mammography promotion, both in terms of young women's willingness to participate, and the potential positive outcomes. Intention predicted initiation of a conversation over and above past behaviour and breast cancer family history. The use of implementation intentions should be explored in future studies to assess whether this strategy is effective in increasing the conversion of intention into behavioural performance in the context of family communication.

## References


Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Department of Health and Aging (2006). B*reastScreen Australia monitoring report 2003-2004*. Canberra: AIHW.

Ajzen, I. (1985). From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behaviour. In J. Kuhl & J. Beckmann, (Eds.), *Action control: From cognition to behaviour*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Process, 50*, 179-211.

Brandstatter, V., Lengfelder, A., & Gollwitzer, P. M. (2001). Implementation intentions and efficient action initiation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 81*(5), 946-960.

Brickell, T. A., Chatzisarantis, N. L. D., & Pretty, G. M. (2006). Using past behaviour and spontaneous implementation intentions to enhance the utility of the theory of planned behaviour of predicting exercise. *The British Journal of Health Psychology, 11*, 249-262.

Chaffee, S. H., McLeod, J. M., & Atkin, C. K. (1971). Parental influences on adolescent media use. *The American Behavioral Scientist, 14*(3), 323-341.

Conner, M., & Armitage, C. J. (1998). The theory of planned behaviour: A review and avenues for future research. *Journal of Applied Social psychology, 28*, 1430-1464.

Conner, M., & McMillan, B. (1999). Interaction effects in the theory of planned behavior: Studying cannabis. *The British Journal of Social Psychology, 38*, 195−222.

Dean, P. B. (2002). The proven reliability of mammography screening. *The Breast, 11*, 211-214.

Fishbein, M., et al. (2001). Factors influencing behavior and behavior change. In A. Baum, T.A. Revenson, & J.E. Singer (Eds.), *Handbook of health psychology*. NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Furstenberg, F. F., Herceg-Baron, R., Shea, J., & Webb, D. (1984). Family communication and teenager's contraceptive use. *Family Planning Perspectives, 16*(4), 163-170.

Godin, G., & Kok, G. (1996). Theory of planned behavior: A review of its applications to health-

related behavior. *American Journal of Health Promotion, 11*, 87-98.

Godin, G., Valois, P., & Lepage, L. (1993). The pattern of influence of perceived behavioural control upon exercising behaviour: An application of Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine, 16*, 81-102.

Gollwitzer, P. M. (1993). Goal achievement: The role of intentions. *European Review of Social Psychology, 4*, 141-185.

Klemi, P. J. et al., (2003). Significant improvement in breast cancer survival through population-based mammography screening. *The Breast, 12*, 308-313.

Kunkel, A., Hummert, M. L., & Dennis, M. R. (2006). Social learning theory: Modeling and communication in the family context. In D.O. Braithwaite & L.A. Baxter, (Eds.), *Engaging theories in family communication: Multiple perspectives*. CA: Sage.

Morgan, S. E. (2005). The power of talk: African-Americans' communication with family members about organ donation and its impact on the willingness to donate organs. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 21*(1), 112-124.

Nekhlyudov, L., Ross-Dengan, D., Fletcher, S. W. (2003). Beliefs and expectations of women under 50 years old regarding screening mammography: A qualitative study. *Journal of General Internal Medicine, 18*, 182-189.

Nollen, N. L., Catley, D., Davies, G., Hall, M., & Ahluwalia, J. S. (2005). Religiosity, social support, and smoking cessation among urben African American smokers. *Addictive Behaviours, 30*, 1225-1229.

O'Callaghan, F. V., & Nausbaum, S. (2006) Predicting bicycle helmet wearing intentions and behavior among adolescents. *Journal of Safety Research, 37*, 425-431.

Orbell, S., Hodgkins, S., & Sheeran, P. (1997). Implementation intentions and the theory of planned behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 23*(9), 945-954.

Quine, L., Rutter, D. R., & Arnold, L. (1998). Predicting and understanding safety helmet use among schoolboy cyclists: A comparison of the theory of planned behavior and the health belief model. *British Journal of Health Psychology, 13*, 251−269.

Rempel, L. A., & Rempel, J. K. (2004). Partner influence on health behaviour decision-making: Increasing breastfeeding duration. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 21*(1), 92-111.

Saphir, M. N., & Chaffee, S. H. (2002). Adolescent's contributions to family communication patterns. *Human Communication Research*, 17, 523-544.

Sheeran, P., Conner, M., & Norman, P. (2001). Can the theory of planned behavior explain patterns of health behaviour change? *Health Psychology, 20*(1), 12-19.

Sheeran, P., & Orbell, S. (1998). Do intentions predict condom use? Meta-analysis and examination of six moderator variables. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 37*, 231-250.

Sheeran, P., & Orbell, S. (2000). Using implementation intentions to increase attendance for cervical screening. *Health Psychology, 19*(3), 283-289.

Steadman, L., & Quine, L. (2004). Encouraging young males to perform testicular self-examination: A simple, but effective, implementation intentions intervention. *British Journal of Health Psychology, 9*, 479-487.

Symonds Downs, D., Graham, G. M., Yang, S., Bargainnier, S., & Vasil, J. (2006). Youth exercise intention and past behavior: Examining the moderating influences of sex and meeting exercise recommendations. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport, 7*(1), 91-99.

Wilson, B. J., et al. (2004). Family communication about genetic risk: The little that is known. *Community Genetics, 7*, 15-24.

# Peeling off the Layers on Values: How do they Influence your Education, Employment and Everything

**Pauline Collins (collins@usq.edu.au)**
School of Law, Faculty of Business
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Marilyn Dorman (dorman@usq.edu.au)**
Learning and Teaching Support Unit
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Jill Lawrence (lawrence@usq.edu.au)**
Faculty of Arts
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

In times of rapid change and busy lives, there may be few opportunities to reflect on who we are as individuals, and how we interact in various communities, networks or groups. However it is vital that we examine issues that are important to us, and which help to shape our responses and contributions in personal and professional contexts. Each of us makes everyday decisions about people and events, based on values developed and refined according to many different influences. By understanding which values are most important to us, and how these might differ or overlap with those of others, we may apply this knowledge for more effective and strategic decision-making. Working in the field of tertiary education it is important for educator's to look at ways of optimising chances of success in learning and teaching encounters. What role do values – particularly teachers' values – play in achieving teaching excellence?

## Introduction

This paper explores the values of academic staff who have been recent recipients of University of Southern Queensland (USQ) teaching (research, or supervision) awards, and examines these in relation to contemporary higher education contexts. Qualitative and quantitative information has been obtained from some of the staff at the University to enable greater awareness of the role of tertiary teacher's values and practices and to uncover their significance in a model of best practice.

This study adds to the existing body of research on values by applying contemporary theory to a new cohort of individuals, namely tertiary teachers. Outcomes from the research include an increased understanding of the impact of personal values on how tertiary teachers develop and deliver their courses and what are desirable values in an environment placing increasing demands on individuals to demonstrate ' best practice'.

## What are Values?

McGrory (2006) from the Society for Values in Higher Education notes that when 'thinking people' refer to values, 'the often mysterious engines that drive human moral choices' the term is often a synonym for ideals, principles, standards and ethics. McGrory highlights the need for academics to take time out for reflection and a personal 'values audit' as well as considering the values driving decision-making at faculty and institutional levels, taking account of influences such as technological changes, reduced financial resources, reduced government funding, and the need to develop and/or update knowledge and skills. In this study, we ask USQ winners of teaching and scholarship awards to reflect on such issues in relation to their own values, both to understand better their own motivational influences, and to inform those with whom they interact as teachers. Arguably, there may be changes or differences also between motivating influences at the start of their careers and as they progress or are promoted. For instance, researchers at the University of Sydney (2006) found that personal fulfillment was the top priority for school leavers seeking to become teachers, followed by enjoyment in their teaching area, and the pleasure of working with young people and impacting on their lives. Preliminary data gathered in this research project suggest that these aspects are still important for university lecturers in this survey, but might not always be the highest priority or most significant motivator.

The issue of values has engaged many researchers, for example, Rokeach (1973), Schwartz (1992a; 1992b) and his collaborators (e.g., Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987), with numerous refinements of values survey instruments emanating from collaborative work. Space in this paper does not allow scope for a complete analysis. Rokeach refers to 'terminal' values (desirable

end-states of existence worth aiming for) values, and 'instrumental' values (means – desirable behaviours to help accomplish those end-states. Further, Rokeach posits a relationship between personality dispositions (such as optimism and pessimism) and values.

Lietz and Matthews (2006) observe that values have cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects, and thus also influence decision-making, preferences and course of action. In their investigation of the influence of students' values on student achievement, they noted differences between Arts students and Sciences students, and differences in the ways in which values affect learning approaches. Arguably, teachers are also students (lifelong learners), but variables such as age and life experience may also need to be considered before extrapolating findings from Lietz and Matthews's undergraduate survey group to a group of experienced university teachers (in this case, winners of teaching excellence awards).

## Schwartz's Value Scale

Schwartz and his many collaborators have made a significant contribution to intercultural research, and encouraged greater analysis of values within cultures, as well as between cultures. Schwartz (1992a) developed a definition of values which involves five key areas: (1) Values are concepts or beliefs; (2) Values concern desirable end-states or actions; (3) Values transcend concrete situations; (4) Values direct our choices and appraisals; and (5) Values are ordered by their relative importance. Schwartz (1992a; 1992b), states all values are universal in character and revolve around basic human needs: biological needs, creating social interaction and preserving group coherence and welfare. The Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) was used (with permission from Professor Shalom Schwartz, 2006) in this research. It has two values lists comprising: 30 items in Values List 1 and 27 in Values List 2, respectively. Of the 57 single values in this value theory (Schwartz 1992b; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987), most are divided among 11 separate value types. The order of items is based on extensive pre-testing across 40 countries, and reflects randomisation of items that index the 10 different basic values (Schwartz, personal communication, 26 April 2006).

Schwartz and Bilsky identified the following motivational and related values:

1. Self-direction (creativity, freedom, choosing one's own goals, curiosity, independence)
2. Stimulation (variety, excitement)
3. Hedonism (pleasure, enjoyment of life)
4. Achievement (ambition, success, capability, influence, intelligence)
5. Power (authority, wealth, social power, public image, social recognition)
6. Security (social order, family security, national security, reciprocation of favours, cleanliness, sense of belonging, health)
7. Conformity (obedience, self-discipline, politeness, honoring parents and elders)
8. Tradition (respect for tradition, humility, devoutness, acceptance of one's portion in life, moderation)
9. Benevolence (helpfulness, loyalty, forgiveness, honesty, responsibility, truth, friendship, mature love)
10. Universalism (broadmindedness, social justice, equality, world at peace, unity with nature, wisdom, protection of the environment)
11. Spirituality (spirituality, meaning in life, sense of inner harmony, sense of detachment)

## USQ Context

Each higher education provider typically publishes statements covering their mission/vision/and values, which, along with other targeted activities, priorities and projects, establishes the university's profile and prioritises for learning and teaching. Theoretically, these should be exemplified through policies such as those on assessment, learning and teaching, plagiarism, multiculturalism, and others which relate to interactions between the university, staff, students, and the various publics associated with each group.

## Expressing Values in the HE Context

One central concern is how much freedom, or encouragement, educators have to express their values? The question arises, can core values really be imposed centrally or will educator's values hinder this process?

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), in a 2006 report titled 'Attitudes to Teaching as a Career', notes that people who chose teaching as a career were chiefly motivated by intrinsic rewards: "wanting to 'make a difference', enjoyment of children etc.'. However it was the extrinsic factors such as workload, employment conditions remuneration and status that were most likely to influence decisions to leave the profession (or not to enter it in the first place). The report, citing findings from international research, also suggested that 'too many government initiatives and external demands can be counter-productive, motivating teachers to leave the profession because of heavy administrative workload, over-full curricula and lack of autonomy in their work'. While the focus in the DEST report is on primary and secondary teaching, there are apparent echoes for the tertiary sector also (e.g., Wells, 2006).

## Methodology

### Participants

The participants comprised USQ winners of Excellence in Teaching and/or Scholarship Awards since 1989 (n = 20). Fourteen were individual winners while 6 had won awards as members of a teaching team. All the five faculties at USQ were represented by winners although the Departments of Psychology and Biology in the Faculty of Sciences were represented by staff members who had not only won teaching awards at USQ but also at national levels (Carrick citations (3) and Awards (2).

### Measures

The study comprised a collective case-study design, including quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative methods included the administration of Schwartz's value questionnaire (Schwartz, 1992a; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987). Qualitative methods involved a semi-structured interview recorded on tape recorder with individual participants and a follow-up email survey with the participants who had not responded to the initial Schwartz survey. It is the preliminary qualitative data collected which constitute the primary focus of this paper.

## Discussion

Three themes emerged from the preliminary data collected and analysed: tertiary teachers' values; the role of values in informing teaching and scholarship; and non-participation.

### Tertiary Teachers' Values

The early qualitative data reveal common threads which encompass an overriding humbleness, connectivity and community. Many participants equated values with personal values, for example one participant defined values as:

*…deeply internalized stable beliefs that strongly impact on other beliefs~ attitudes and emotions~ influence behaviour~ and provide an affective or cognitive lens for perceiving the world.*

Participants were also specific about what their personal values encompassed:

*I would say that some of my personal key values include: (1) a deep respect for, and regard for, individuals – coming from a belief that each person on this earth is of value and worth, and that people are more important than work, profit or personal gain; (2) high regard for authenticity – coming a strong belief that an open, honest, transparent and 'real' self is the key to strong and trusting relationships with others; (4) an avid curiosity for, interest in, and concern for, the lives of others – coming from a place of wanting to connect with others, to care for them, to help people grow, and to be open to the wonderful complexities of life; (5) a high regard for community – coming from a belief that cooperation, contribution and connection are essential to us making a real difference in our world; (6) accountability – coming from a strong belief that I live in relationship with others, and that I am held to account for the impact my life has on others.*

There were synergies between those who perceived their values to be personal. One participant nominated "faithfulness/kindness/reliability/honesty/efficiency" whereas another highlighted "trust/honesty/loyalty/help others". "Honesty and integrity" were prioritised by a further participant while another participant defined their values as "making a difference (meaning in life?), respect for self and others, social justice and integrity".

Two participants spoke of values as guiding principles: "broad statements of important guiding parameters in life" and "guiding principles to prioritise activities and to inform interaction with others".

Other participants defined values in terms of authentic learning and their roles in influencing their students' teaching behaviours through role-modelling, technology, experiential learning and relevant and flexible learning environments:

*If you are asking with respect to teaching and learning then giving students the best possible engaging learning experience that is contextually relevant to their future workplace: modeling effective approaches in pedagogy, using technology appropriately, etc., via using an experiential learning lens.*

*I have developed and maintained a relevant, flexible, adaptive and participative learning environment that recognizes the needs and aspirants of students….this environment enhances their enjoyment and appreciation of the learning experience and provides opportunities to develop as lifelong learners.*

### The Role of Values in Informing Teaching and Scholarship

The preliminary data suggest that many of the participants had not reflected explicitly about the links between their values per se and their teaching philosophies and practices. However, their stated teaching philosophies did disclose connections between their values and philosophies. This was particularly evident in teaching philosophies underpinned by spiritual beliefs. For example one participant entitled their teaching philosophy "A Christian Approach to Teaching" and reflected:

*Every student who enters my office or classroom is a child of God…Whether Australian or foreigner, friend or stranger, my students have within them a divine spark waiting to be transformed by learning about the human condition…there can be no doubt that a*

*Christian teacher has a duty of care of the most profound sort.*

Another participant also defined their values in terms of religion:

*The universe and all creatures in it are subject to a good and holy God…mankind is inherently predisposed to evil…education provides the basis for civilisation and a buffer against anarchy.*

A further participant revealed the strong Christian servant leadership beliefs underpinning their teaching philosophy and practices:

*These values have led me to take a very others-oriented, inclusive and servant approach to my teaching. I would say I work hard to create an environment in which students know that they are valued and respected, and in which I am also free to be myself with them. It means I incorporate their life experiences and interests – as I am driven by a deep curiosity about their life situations and contexts. My classes tend to be very much community-oriented, as I build in avenues for the students to connect with each other, to work with each other, to teach each other. My scholarship is driven by my commitment to ensuring that I am a good servant-leader – that I am embracing effective teaching approaches, and in how I seek to amplify my service in this educational environment, I also demonstrate effective leadership. My scholarship also focuses on developing a deep understanding of how people learn and grow, and of the diversity of contexts within which my students will specifically be working in as professionals, so that I can mould the learning experience to their specific needs.*

Most of the participants prioritised the student and discussed their beliefs about making students feel important. These student-centred values are evident in others' testimonies, though without an explicitly spiritual background. For example:

*As young folk say these days, it's all about 'keepin it real'. When you think about what students need to be ready for the teaching profession of the 21st Century, we as responsible educators must ensure that we provide the students with the arsenal they need to work to their full potential in the workplace. So a student-centred, experiential-learning approach is used.*

The question of whether values are explicit or implicit in teaching decisions emerged from the data collected. In the semi-structured interview, one participant reflected on the implicit nature of values and how they may not be an explicit or conscious part of the teaching process: 'I have not thought about my values'. However this participant was also adamant about their importance in teaching:

*My values make up who I am and what I am helps determine what I teach and how I teach it.*

This participant was also inspired by intellectual curiosity:

*A desire to learn and a curiosity about the world affects how you look at material you are going to teach as well as who you are going to teach and how you value people and how you value differences in other people.*

Many participants revealed the connections between their stated values and their teaching styles. For example, one participant's stated values (self-respect, self-discipline, integrity, wisdom, intelligence, politeness, independence, achievement, responsibility, and freedom) directly influenced the sense of achievement they desired to instil with their teaching style:

*I like to set challenges for students, I like them to extend themselves, and I like them to develop a good sense of self-calibration so that they are able to engage in life's challenges with a realistic sense of their own potential. I have a particular abhorrence of spoon-feeding, join-the-dots type teaching, and extravagantly positive feedback.*

## Non-participation

The small, yet whole-of-population sample size was complicated by the low response rate to the initial survey: n = 7 or 35% of the respondents. The project's response rate is in line with national figures. Dey (2007), for example, reports that national data show a continuing decline in the willingness of people to respond to surveys. However, given the small whole-of-population sample we wanted to reflect about the reasons for respondents' non-participation especially in relation to questions about winners being targeted to assume increased responsibility, for example through working parties and committees.

Data collected in replies to a follow-up email to non-responding participants revealed that time and job factors were indeed major contributing factors. Two of the non-respondents explicitly referred to the 'time' factor, in 'lack-of-time' with one participant, a senior academic staff member who had recently assumed extra higher level duties, reflecting:

*The answer is that I don't have time. I am wearing three hats and have been for the past 12 months. This time commitment has nothing to do with winning an excellence award, unless you take into consideration that good teachers are usually also good administrators and good researchers and therefore get asked to take on many responsibilities.*

A third participant discussed their full-time teaching responsibilities as well as their role (as head of a university research centre), describing consequences in relation to email, for example:

*With over 1300 emails in my in tray with about 60-80 relevant emails arriving/day (yes, I do have a Junk folder which has about 20 messages/day) it is more*

*likely that your email got smothered in the sea of other messages.*

There were other reasons for the participants' reticence in responding however. One participant, commented that the survey had 'emerged at a really busy time'. This participant also revealed their distaste, in general, for the process of applying for awards:

*I think the more important reason though is the idea of being an 'excellent' teacher. I think the process of applying and winning the Carrick Award made me tired of thinking about the processes I use in teaching. Frankly I was sick of talking about how and why I was a 'good' teacher. I get put off by people who tell me how good they are at something, and I think that has a significant bearing of my failure to respond. I didn't want to become like that myself! If it were a completely anonymous process, I may have been more forthcoming.*

The data reveal the diversity even within such a small cohort. It highlights the need for further research with larger survey populations, including investigation of further variables such as disciplines-base and genders.

## Issues

It is proposed that personal values play a significant role in the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, and application and therefore the values of the educator will impact on the student and the university as well as the wider community. Policy statements and central discourses demand educators conform to a prescribed set of values, often ill defined, and yet we know little about how this is filtered by the educators and how certain values are reinforced to the exclusion of others.

What things do educators value? Is there sufficient common ground for a shared value system to exist? Is a shared value system desirable? Is the fashion for centralised initiatives, encouraging, imposing or preventing the development of a shared value system? Educators' values are not only a personal matter but by the nature of their role a matter for public concern also.

Values also relate to motivation and self-efficacy, and may thus impact on student retention and satisfaction, as well as their overall success as learners, and their work-life balance. These areas require further investigation.

## References


Dey, E. L. (1997). Working with low survey response rates: the efficacy of weighting adjustments. *Research in Higher Education,* Springerlink.

DEST. (2006). *Attitudes to teaching as a career*, 5. Retrieved online 25 July 2006 fromhttp://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/publications_resources/profiles/attitudes_teaching_as_career.htm

Lietz, P., & Matthews, B. (2006). Are values more important than learning approaches/ factors influencing student performance at an international university. *Paper presented at the AARE 2006 Conference*, Adelaide, Australia. LIE06070.

McGrory, K. (n.d.). '*Teaching and values: What values will be taken into the 21st Century?". Essays on Teaching Excellence: Toward the Best in the Academy.* Retrieved 27/03/06 from http://www.teaching2.nmsu.edu/Resources/newsletters/TeachingExc/VO8/v8n7.html

Nickolas, J. (2004). *Australian legal education and the instability of critique.* MULR.

Rokeach, M. (1973). *The nature of human values.* New York: Free Press.

Schwartz, S. H. (1992a). *Portrait value questionnaire*, Retrieved online 3 August 2007 from http://www.imo-international.de/index_englisch.htm?/englisch/html/pvq_info_en.htm.

Schwartz, S. H. (1992b). The universal content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 25*, 1-62.

Schwartz, S. H. & Bilsky, W. (1987). Towards a universal psychology structure of human values. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53,* 550-562.

University of Sydney. (2006). Significant teachers inspire top students to take after them. Retrieved 24/03/06 from http://www.usyd.edu.a u/news /84.html?newscategoryid=15&newsstoryid=961

Wells, M. (2006). *Professional identity and the contemporary university: A culture of control, accountability and virtuality?* Paper presented at the AARE 2006 Conference, Adelaide, Australia. Wel06087.

# Circles of Cultural Learning: Aboriginal Grandmothers Challenge the Colonial Legacy

**Zohl dé Ishtar (z.deishtar@uq.edu.au)**
Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD 4072, Australia

**Abstract**

The increasing public outcry as White Australia awakens to the epidemic of child sexual abuse occurring in Australian Aboriginal communities is examined through the historical context of government negligence and mismanagement and bureaucratic indifference as it has played out in the remote Balgo community in the south-eastern Kimberley. The Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Association, a courageous group of Aboriginal women elders, has long organised to deal with the many social and health problems facing their peoples, particularly their youth and children. The Kapululangu elders have provided dynamic cultural learning opportunities for their younger generations and continue to aspire to implement a whole-of-life, whole-of-community "Circles of Cultural Learning" program which aims to foster pride in Aboriginality as a protection against cultural trauma. The elders have been hindered by a lack of funding yet, by working together and with deep faith in the *Tjukurrpa* (the universal life force), they draw upon their peoples' Living Culture: an unassailable cultural force which leads people to transform their world even when to do so seems impossible. The solution to problems in Aboriginal communities lies with Aboriginal people, not with an unresponsive government.

## Kapululangu – The Grandmothers' Strength

> Women are really strong. We worried for all the kids. We can take them bush and learn them. They gotta know Country. They might get lost in their mind. (Yintjurru Margaret Anjule, 2006).

The Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Association is an Indigenous women's cultural initiative for advancing the health and social wellbeing of the people of Balgo in the south-eastern Kimberley, 270 km south of Halls Creek, Western Australia. Kapululangu was initiated by Balgo's women elders in 1999 to assist them in "growing up" their people strong through the knowledge of their cultural heritage to have pride in their Aboriginality, as a protective measure against the traumas and challenges facing their contemporary lives.

Balgo's women elders are seeking to respond to the full spectrum of social problems manifesting in their community, including child sexual abuse and other forms of violence against women and children. As the *nintipuka tutju* (Law Women) and *tjarrtjurra* (women healers) of their people, the Kapululangu elders are worried for their families. They believe that Balgo's people are hurting because they are traumatised by the persistent cultural colonisation of a dominant society.

Culture includes lifestyle, the sacred, intellect, the visible and invisible, the moral – all aspects of living. Culture is the life-blood of people: it makes them what they are. But when a people's culture is overlooked, ignored, marginalised, eroded, neglected, denounced and disallowed, they receive a deep message that they do not matter – and as a result their self-esteem and sense of worthiness is undermined, and their ability to respond to life and living is numbed. Because people identify so strongly through their culture, when this basic human need is undermined by another dominant society, people become dis-heartened – they literally lose their heart. This psychic numbing lies at the core of all the social problems in Balgo.

*Culture* (customs) and *Law* (religion/philosophy) are the foundation stones upon which the future of Balgo must be built. For the Kapululangu elders, their own Law and culture must form the bedrock upon which the bricks of education, health, housing and employment are built. While these essential services are all important they cannot stand alone. Unless a strong foundation is built then the bricks piled on top will continue to fall down. For the elders that foundation is cultural heritage – *their* cultural heritage. The solution lies in creating opportunities for young people so that they can engage in ways that empower them to know who they are, to feel proud of their Aboriginality – to cherish *their* cultural heritage. Kapululangu's elders believe that cultural knowledge transmission must play a central role in any attempt to rectify the problems facing their families and communities. Their people, particularly their young ones, are suffering from a diminished self-esteem resulting from a rupture in their culture heritage, and a loss of contact with their land-based traditions.

Thus it was that the Kapululangu elders aimed to nurture, maintain and revive the practice of women's traditional and contemporary culture as a living, dynamic and relevant force for younger generations. Kapululangu was designed to assist the Balgo women elders to teach their customary Law and land relationships and to provide access to the traditional healing methods and skills of the *tjarrtjurra,* women healers. They were supported by the male elders and by members of Balgo's middle-generation who equally

stressed the importance of their people holding on to their culture.

During 1999 through 2001, the Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre ran a dynamic intergenerational cultural knowledge transmission program which involved health, education and cultural elements from the Indigenous perspective. The Kapululangu elders offered culture classes for young girls on the Balgo Women's Law Ground, and cultural camps for girls and boys where they took the male elders and together taught the kids dancing and desert skills. They took young women hunting on a regular basis, and formed a dance troupe which toured across Australia and to Hawaii and Canada. The elders travelled along Dreaming Tracks performing rituals at sacred sites, and trained young and middle generation women in *Yawulyu* (Women's Law) and *tjarrtjurra* (women's healing). They led women's ceremonies, and were the chief mourners during Sorry Time (two month long mourning rites). Living together in a traditional women's camp – a *tjilimi* – on the Women's Law Ground the elders also provided a safe haven for women and children escaping, avoiding or recovering from family violence and child sexual assault; a *tjarrtjurra* healing service for women, men and children; a night watch program against petrol sniffing and juvenile crime; a respite care service for older women including two women said to be aged over 100 years; and a Keeping Place for sacred *tarruku* (ritual items).

The elders' strength came through living together in the *tjilimi,* the women's ceremony ground. This enabled them to make ceremony part of their everyday living and this sacralised their lives and giving rise to an amorphous, unassailable force which resonated with their contemporary world by linking them to the *Tjukurrpa* (the Dreaming, the universal life force). It was from this gynocentric locus which engendered Living Culture that the elders ran their cultural programs. It was through the *tjilimi* experience that the elders embodied and gave breathe to their fullest potential; for "[w]hen the fullest breathe of a people's cultural voice is allowed to flourish, this engenders cultural energy so potent that it touches the hearts of its members and stirs in them a conviction of their own completeness which, unconquerable and impregnable, can heal soul wounds and refashion worlds" (dé Ishtar, 2005, p. vi).

## Circles of Cultural Learning: a Creative Solution

Kapululangu is uniquely positioned to contribute something very vital to any strategic attempt to rectify the current health and social problems facing Balgo residents: the cultural knowledge held by the women elders. Cultural trauma can only be healed by local people responding through local solutions to locally identified problems: this is achieved through tapping into their cultural heritage.

In 2004 the Kapululangu elders developed a framework which they called the "Circles of Cultural Learning" program. This program would provide a vibrant whole-of-life, whole-of-community intra- and inter-generational cultural knowledge transmission program built on traditional incremental learning and teaching processes within a series of co-relating circles of different age groups anchored by the elders in the centre. The project will create an innovative learning place, where learning is embedded in communal everyday life and utilises local Indigenous knowledges, both traditional and contemporary. With the women elders as the main teachers of cultural knowledge, this project will draw on their unique expertise, skills and knowledge. The elders will be assisted by the middle-generation women to provide tutoring for four distinct groups: young women, girls, school children (including prepubescent boys), and toddlers and babies. They will work in mutual support the male elders working with the younger men and boys. By maintaining the enjoyment of Indigenous cultural practices through community involvement the project aid towards advancing health, social wellbeing and active citizenship.

The "Circles of Cultural Learning" framework was trialled in 2000-2001 when Kapululangu designed, hosted and administered the Strong Culture: Strong Families project funded by the Office of the Status of Women. At Kapululangu's invitation, the project involved all of Balgo's agencies in a 12 month program of 27 separate activities and events, support groups, and training for Indigenous parents, nurses, teachers and wardens. The project depended upon the guiding participation of all members of the community, all sectors of interest, all age groups, and both sexes. Unfortunately the SCSF project collapsed in July 2001 as a direct consequence of administrative dysfunction within the Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) – the local administration – which ricocheted throughout the community, and imploded on Kapululangu. In 2007, the elders continue to seek funding to establish their much needed project.

## Balgo's Colonial Legacy

Balgo's turbulent political history has been a difficult environment in which to form an efficient and effective women's organisation. Balgo was established in 1939 as a Catholic Mission: the local priest governed the community under the direction of his Bishop in Broome for 44 years. The Catholic Church's efforts to instigate a mechanism for local decision-making in 1979 was abruptly interrupted when the Federal government

forced the closure of the Mission in 1983, appointing a secular administration in its stead. Over the past 24 years the secular Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) administration has been dogged by mismanagement, negligence and corruption. Most White administrators operated perpendicular to both the White law and Indigenous governance structures. The occasional White male administrator has been arrested and served time in prison, but most have gotten away with it. Between October 2000 and May 2001, four "coups" by White council employees vying for the lucrative administrative role imploded upon Balgo, hitting Kapululangu most forcefully.

In October 2003, the continuing dysfunction eventually forced the Federal Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations (ORAC, now ORASTIC) placing the local Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation "under Administration" thereby dismissing the local Aboriginal Council. However, the problems persisted. Since 2003, Balgo has had five administrators, each one unilaterally appointed by the government department without consultation with the community. The longest serving administrator was an accountancy company based in Adelaide. In November 2006, following repeated complaints about negligence which had left the community without funds and on the brink of insolvency, ORAC decided against renewing the contract of this administrator. It placed a Perth-based accountancy company in the position. The patterns of limited communication with the residents and the acute lack of basic services (such as housing repairs and rubbish collection) have persisted.

The discrepancies of expecting an accountant living in a southern city to work effectively with a remote Aboriginal community in a way which will enable it to build community capacity, tap into human capital, and develop services for the good of its people have been overlooked in the government's administrative approach. The strategy invites problems: it undermines effective and efficient governance. Since 1983 there has been no organ through which to facilitate decision-making, consultation or negotiation which truly involves the Balgo residents. The government's introduced administrative system has also created ongoing difficulties for Kapululangu. The elders have achieved the successes of Kapululangu despite receiving little funding from the bureaucratic systems which are expected to govern Indigenous communities.

## Howard's "Aboriginal Solution"

In June 2007, when the Howard Government declared itself concerned about the sexual abuse of children in Aboriginal communities, it instigated a program of dramatic intervention in the Northern Territory. Flashing its concern for the tragedy at lightening speed throughout the nation (albeit rather belatedly), it was a barely thought through and poorly explained rescue package which started with the administration of Aboriginal communities and ended with the police, with the army added in for good measure.

Howard's twelve-point "Aboriginal Solution" seemed only obliquely related to child sexual assault, and in most cases even the most tentative link with child sexual assault was missing. The plan consisted of banning the possession of pornography; compulsory health checks for all Aboriginal children to identify and treat health problems and any effects of abuse; enforced school attendance by linking this to the parents' income support and family assistance payments; welfare reforms; alcohol restrictions; ground cleanup and repair of communities; improving houses and tying them to individual tenant contracts; scrapping the permit system; the acquiring of Aboriginal townships through five year leases; increasing policing; and appointing managers/administrators to all government businesses in prescribed communities.

In presenting its strategy, the Federal Government failed to acknowledge the concern of Indigenous Australians for their children as indicated by, for example, Kapululangu's repeated requests for assistance to deal with the problem for many years. The package completely overlooked and marginalised Indigenous initiatives. Indeed many of these strategies – most noticeably the highly flagged administration and policing strategies – had already been implemented in Balgo and had been found to fail or, at best, to simply maintain the status quo. Placing Balgo under Administration had eliminated the problem of mismanagement, but had done little to dent the problem of negligence while further robbing the community of a council voice and an avenue for organisation. The introduction of a permanent police presence in 2005 had come after over a decade of requests from the community, but violence remains high, particularly against women and children. That the problem of child sexual abuse has reared its ugly head two years after a permanent presence was installed in Balgo should be alarm enough to recognise that neither of these strategies are stand-alone solutions.

With the Federal Government holding jurisdiction over Australian territories it could fail to negotiate or even consult with the Northern Territory government, but the project could not be rolled out nationally because the Federal Government has limited determining control in the States. The Western Australian government responded to Federal Government's requests for compliance to its strategy by indicating that it had been working on the problem of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities for several years – specifically through instituting police presences in towns such as Balgo. Now with the issue

more loudly on the table, it would form a Special Police Taskforce to inquire into child sexual abuse. The weeks that followed saw small groups of police officers visiting key Aboriginal communities in Western Australia to survey children and their families. The blitz was code named "Operation Barnham".

Balgo was one of the first communities to be included in this scheme. The Police Taskforce arrived in Balgo on 16 July 2007 and spent three days probing the community. As a consequence, two boys aged 14 and 15 were charged with aggravated sexual penetration of a child aged between 13 and 16. An 11 year old boy was found to have forced two pre-school girls to have sex with him during which time he infected them with a sexually transmitted disease: he was not prosecuted, the incident was referred as a health issue, noone asked how an 11 year old boy had contracted a sexual transmittable disease. The Western Australian police charged 15 Aboriginal men and 6 boys from across the Kimberley with 39 child sex offences. In the northern Kimberley town of Kalumburu 15 men were charged with 103 offences.

The day that the Police Taskforce left Balgo a group of elders and middle-generation men and women approached the Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Association and complained about how the Taskforce had conducted itself in their town. Some members of the community had been happy to host the Taskforce, and the majority were indifferent. But that, in this political climate, some residents complained about the Police Taskforce was a significant statement of just how upset they were. According to the complainants, the Taskforce had failed to inform and consult with the community elders before visiting their community, and had failed to full involve the elders or parents in their questioning of young women and men. They had held meetings with young women and men aged around 14 years old where they had asked them what was described as "rude questions about sex". Some middle generation residents had been involved in these meetings but the elders were concerned that many parents had not been properly consulted or involved, and they were worried for the wellbeing of the children who had been subjected to what they considered to be culturally-inappropriate questioning. They complained that the majority of the community had had no idea that these meetings were happening until they were over. The complaints identify the need for external agencies to include the elders, to ensure they are all inclusive in their approach to the community, and that they work with the community in a more culturally appropriate manner. That these complaints were voiced provides an opportunity for the government, the police and other external agencies, to ensure that any introduced strategies are anchored by community ownership, through the elders.

## White Dysfunction: A Major Contributor to the Crisis

"Dysfunction" is a term one most often hears used in reference to Aboriginal people and communities: it is seldom used in relation to White society's interaction with the Aboriginal world. Bureaucratic structures lie at the core of these relationships. Indeed bureaucracy has long been a major stumbling block to Indigenous advancement in Australia. Take the operation of the Coalition of Australian Government's (COAG) trials in which Balgo is part of the identified Western Australian area. In February 2006 it was reported that ten times more funds had been spent on the bureaucracy running these programs than on the programs themselves (Schubert, 2006). Most of the funds allocated had been spent on overseeing the "trial". In one case, the then Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) had spent $327,784 to administer only $34,318. In one community the Commonwealth Education Department had spent $1.9million administering a program of $1.8million. In the East Kimberley, where Balgo is a main settlement, the Department of Transport and Regional Services was planning to spend $1,071,800 overseeing projects worth only $470,000. Labor's then shadow minister for Indigenous Affairs Chris Evans warned that DIMIA had spent up to $10million on the COAG trails without achieving anything for the Indigenous residents. Newly appointed Indigenous Affairs Minister Mal Brough tried to argue that the funds were required to ensure efficient administration of the projects to cut down on waste. While extreme, there was nothing new about this scenario. Both Federal and State governments have historically been slow and inefficient in tackling Indigenous disadvantage. By March 2006, the Federal government had spent only $83 million, less than half the $225 million allocated to the Indigenous education program for 2005 (Peatling, 2006; also Graham, 2006).

Similarly, in Balgo, funding promised to Kapululangu for 2005-06 (only $8000) had still not been received in August 2007, despite Kapululangu making repeated request for reimbursement. Funding of $20,000 to Wirrimanu Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) for women's services which Kapululangu was to carry out in 2006-07 had also not been received. The government had rejected Kapululangu's request for direct funding, opting to provide women's money to WAC even though it had never provided women's services since its inception in 1983.

While the government and its bureaucracy have been flailing about, Balgo residents have been reeling under the frightening weight of a major social crisis of which child sexual assault is only one manifestation. In November 2002 and September 2003, two of Balgo's young men hanged themselves. In March 2004 two teenagers were found attempting to hang themselves:

both were flown to the hospital. There were two incidences of teenagers being stabbed by others under the influence of petrol sniffing. Violence was on the increase. Since then the problem has persisted, although tempered by the introduction of youth workers (with little assistance from the governments). In the hiatus of administration which has battered Balgo for the past twenty-plus years it is the local Indigenous community and their locally-based agencies, including Kapululangu, which have made the difference to people's lives not the governments.

In 2004, the Western Australian Coroner Alistair Hope, reporting on the increasing incidences of suicides and self-harm among Balgo's youth, criticised the government's bungling of its own programs in the remote community. The Coroner determined that each of the deceased "had led lives characterised by illness, hopelessness, violence and alienation from their families and community" (Hope, 2004:3). He added, "poverty, an unhygienic environment, health problems, low education levels, almost total unemployment, boredom and general feelings of hopelessness" were the core elements of the environment in which Balgo's youth took to sniffing petrol and committed suicide (Hope, 2004). The improvements that were needed in the community to stop the suicides "seem to be simple and yet their achievement appears to have been beyond the capability of both Commonwealth and State Governments in spite of the provision of very considerable amounts of money for what is, in the context of Balgo, a relatively small number of persons" (Hope, 2004, p. 30). Quoting the Coroner of South Australia, who had made similar findings there, Hope urgently recommended "*prompt, forthright, properly planned, properly funded action"* (Chivel, in Hope:2004, p. 36, his emphasis).

## Conclusion: The Imperative of Indigenous Solutions

Given the long and ongoing history of administrative mismanagement and bureaucratic stumbling it would seem appropriate to give Balgo's Indigenous residents the opportunity to have a go at rectifying the situation, or at least contributing their efforts to those of the governments. Given the 2006-2007 national outcry around the issue of child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities, it would seem timely to support the development of Indigenous strategies, finding solutions which come from the community, which can be implemented by the community, for the benefit of the community.

The Kapululangu elders welcome any well-considered assistance in overcoming this trauma, provided it is culturally safe and respectful of Indigenous ways and processes, and stems from and includes the local Indigenous people themselves. Their passionate concern for their grandchildren and families has ensured that their determined vision for their peoples' future has persisted. They carry on with their programs, albeit somewhat less than they could be if they were given the resources controlled by White hands, but they endure nonetheless. They are sustained by a strong belief that only through connectedness with the *Tjukurrpa* will their people heal the trauma stemming from decades of cultural marginalization.

It is a national disgrace that, even while the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous women and children are heralded as a matter of upmost concern to the governments, Indigenous women's initiatives continue to languish without adequate support. It is imperative that the Kapululangu elders' cultural knowledge and spirited determination be included in all strategies and interventions aimed at eradicating the social problems in Balgo. Without the re-creation of their strong cultural pride and self-esteem, Balgo's people will continue to be disempowered while an impotent White government continues to scratch its collective head wondering what the problem is.

## Acknowledgements

The author wishes to recognise the elders of the Kapululangu Aboriginal Women's Association for their ongoing guidance and their determination to teach their grandchildren. *Katimalkuya Yawulyu kamu kulintjurratjiitjilu makarrmanulkutjananya.* They will hold onto their Women's Law and teach their children and make them strong.

## References

dé Ishtar, Z. (2005). *Holding Yawulyu: White culture and Black women's law.* Melbourne: Spinifex Press.

Graham, C. (2006). Black buckets: Keeping up appearances. *Indigenous Times, 103*, 20 April.

Hope, A. N. (2004). *Record of Investigation into Death. Inquest into the deaths of Owen James Gimme and Mervyn Milner.* Perth, WA: Western Australia Government.

Peatling, S. (2006). Money for Indigenous Education Unspent. *Sydney Morning Herald*. 17 March. www.smh.com.au accessed 19 March 2006.

Shubert, M. (2006). Aboriginal aid swamped by red tape. *The Age.* 16 February. www.theage.com.au accessed 18 February 2006.

# Australian Aboriginal Women: Experiences of Living in, Outside and Around the Margins

**Bronwyn Fredericks (BronwynFredericks@qaihc.com.au)**
Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine
Monash University, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, VIC 3004 Australia
Centre for Clinical Research Excellence (CCRE), Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC)
PO Box 698 Fortitude Valley, Qld 4006 Australia

**Abstract**

Aboriginal women are said to be within the 'margin' or 'marginal' as the dominant view is 'centred'. Often in some of the discourses, we are an appendage to the main body of work, like an afterthought that is not separated, but lost within the text of the dominant voice. For example, Hage (1998), in reflecting on his own book, states "I have become very aware, only belatedly, that this book fails to incorporate the problematic representation of Aboriginality within white fantasies" (p. 24). This paper will present some of the issues of marginality as it relates to Aboriginal women in Australia. Verbal narratives from interviews undertaken with Aboriginal women in Rockhampton will additionally be incorporated and offer the experience of their lived realities.

## Introduction

To work with Aboriginal women and giving voice to each other, and then for me not to have a voice within my work and also within the context of my public work is a contradiction. As Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000) wrote when referring to her work representing an Indigenous standpoint within Australian feminism, "My role as an academic analyst is inextricable from my embodiment as an Indigenous woman" (p. xvi). Moreton-Robinson argues that she cannot separate her Aboriginal self away from her academic analyst self. Aboriginality implies certain assumptions about how one sees the world in the same way that other cultures, including Anglo-Australians, have a set of assumptions related to how they see the world. I thus acknowledge my own Aboriginality in the same way that Aileen Moreton-Robinson acknowledges her Aboriginality as integral to her research. I am an Aboriginal woman from the South-east Queensland region.

Aboriginal women are designated as Other, yet still encompassed within dominant Australian society. Our colonial experiences are tied to the colonisers. I know few other words to describe people who are not Indigenous. I have learnt that one is either Indigenous or non-Indigenous, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. I have learnt that one is either white or not-white, Anglo-Australian or Other, or Australian or Other. Some women are mixtures of the binary, the coloniser and colonised within their bodies and within their cultural memories (Croft, 2003). In essence, this is the problematic nature of the constructed discourse and Australia's colonised history. Aboriginal women have an understanding of their subjective identity of the labelled 'Other' through lived experiences. In addition, Aboriginal women also have an understanding of people from the dominating culture as 'Other'.

## Aboriginal Women and Feminism

A number of Aboriginal women have examined the issues of feminism in relation to Aboriginal women generally or as individuals (Moreton-Robinson, 2000). Historically, Aboriginal women generally found little comfort or support from non-Indigenous women in Australia who were additionally involved in this subordination. The majority of non-Indigenous women were historically also active participants in the marginalisation and the denial of human, civil, political, legal, sexual and Indigenous rights of Aboriginal women. Their attitudes, like male attitudes, are forged within a different race, class, sex, colonialist and neo-colonialist practice. Non-Indigenous women have benefited and profited from past and continued marginalisation and oppression of Aboriginal women. They are therefore not separate in how they view Aboriginal women and Aboriginality. Despite the struggle for women's rights and the growth in momentum of the women's movement in Australia, the positioning of Aboriginal women remained stagnant for many years. In a well-known and often repeated analysis, Aboriginal writer, Jackie Huggins (1994) in her discussion of the place of Aboriginal women and the White Women's Movement suggests that,

> Aboriginal women are viewed as the 'other' based on a menial or sexual image: as more sexual but less cerebral, more interesting perhaps but less intellectual, more passive but less critical, more emotional but less analytical, more exotic but less articulate, more withdrawn but less direct, more cultural but less stimulating, more oppressed but less political than they are (p. 77).

Huggins made an important contribution to Australian feminism and has challenged the Australian feminist movement in its attitude and perception of Aboriginal women. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2000) incorporates the earlier work of Aboriginal women such as Jackie Huggins. She provides an Indigenous standpoint from which to view feminism in Australia and offers a rigorous explanation to Australian history, race, gender and class issues within Australian feminism. She places a major challenge to the Australian Women's Movement. In her work, she presents the Women's Movement in Australia as being essentially 'white middle class women's business'. She provides examples as to how anthropological, feminist and academic interpretations of "Indigenous woman" are in many instances reinterpretations of Aboriginal women's lived experiences. Furthermore, she maintains that the reinterpretations erase our subjectivity, because of the conventions of representation bounded by their discipline as well as with university and political and white Australian culture. It is how we are written about and the positioning from which we are written about. I add to this it is also how we are thought about and talked about. In the process of how we are thought about, talked about and written about, we become objects and 'Other'.

## Aboriginal Women's Subjectivity

When one looks from a non-Indigenous Australian viewpoint, the dominant view is that Aboriginal women are away from the centre, living in or at the margin from the dominant viewpoint. We are designated as 'Other' by the dominant society. Fanon (1971) explained that for the "native, objectivity is always directed against him" (p. 61). The problem for us as Aboriginal women arises when the objective view is seen as more reliable and more accurate than our own stories and understandings about ourselves. Sometimes people who have studied Aboriginal history at university or worked in an Aboriginal program with the government or worked within or at the fringes of an Aboriginal community seem to acquire the innate ability to be 'more objective' and to understand Aboriginal people, what Aboriginal people doing and how and why Aboriginal people are doing it. The same principle applies to the study of animals. The difference is that animals cannot talk. We as Aboriginal people can talk, think, do, and interpret for ourselves. The State also supports this when it engages the objective view of us developed by non-Indigenous experts about Aboriginal women. Some of these accounts also include Aboriginal subjective information (narrative) in the form of quotes. Therefore, non-Indigenous people use Aboriginal subjectivity to substantiate their arguments about Aboriginal people. When Aboriginal women use Aboriginal women's stories and understandings it is sometimes seen as being too subjective, 'too close' to what is happening. I have heard that Aboriginal women when speaking from the first person speak from the "emotional and not the analytical". This offers an example to the words of Jackie Huggins quoted in the previous section. This rule does not apply to non-Indigenous women who are not deemed 'too close', 'too emotional' or subjective to the issues of non-Indigenous women or indeed all women. They are deemed 'passionate about the issues'. Aboriginal women have long been exposed to intellectual imperialism and constantly struggle to defend our worldviews against those who wish to own them, write about them and denigrate them. Part of the overall struggle for Aboriginal women is the right to define ourselves. We need non-Indigenous women to stand with us in defending our right to define ourselves. It is when we stand alone in defence of our rights that we are also seen as not worthy of defence.

In exploring Aboriginal women's viewpoint in terms of Aboriginal society, Aboriginal women, men, children and community are in the centre, the rest of the world is at or in the margin. Within our frame of the world we are the sovereign women of this place, of the many Countries within and across the land mass now called Australia. As Irene Watson (1998) has argued, the Aboriginal way of knowing the world is not dead to Aboriginal men and women, but is alive in the minds of those who continue to see through other horizons. I have been at international Indigenous gatherings and forums and witnessed Australian Aboriginal peoples given recognition and respect by other Indigenous peoples of the world as being the 'old living cultures in the world'. As an Aboriginal woman I know that I am connected to those who have gone before. Their contributions are what help make us the Aboriginal people we are today. We are connected in relationship to time immemorial, to land, between people and country, between the corporeal and non-corporeal world. Aboriginal women have different gendered realities from Aboriginal men, with different responsibilities to country. One is no less important than the other. Aboriginal women's lives are based on interrelationships, interdependencies, interconnections and continuities, which form the whole. In these complexities, Aboriginal women were once empowered, sovereign women. Through the processes of invasion and colonisation, this all changed.

In looking at our positioning in its entirety, Aboriginal women are at the margin and at the centre, within and without, inside and outside at the same time. Within this duality, there are questions such as what is the margin and what is the centre where Aboriginal women live inside as well as outside one's Self? We know what our experiences are; what our lives are like and we have the

capacity to theorise about ourselves from our positionings, to know what is best for us. Aboriginal women know when we are compared to non-Indigenous people that we are collectively sicker, poorer, less educated, more unemployed, less skilled, face greater numbers of our family in jail, die younger, attend a greater number of funerals in any one year, are subject to higher levels of violence, racism, sexism, are regarded as marginal, a minority and more, than non-Indigenous women. We live with the day to day reality that our lands and rights as Indigenous women are constantly under threat. We do have the capacity and can theorise from our experiences of these multiple, interrelated issues and oppressions which include class, racism, sexism and homophobia. These oppressions operate simultaneously. James and Busia (1993) cite the work of Stimson (1989) who asserts in her analysis of Afro-American women that, "…although Black women are often characterised as victims theorising is a form of agency that provides them with opportunities to 'learn, think, imagine, judge, listen, speak, write and act'" (p. 2). This provides not only the individual the opportunity to move from the position of individual to activist, but for other members of the community and society to do so too.

Epistemologically, experience is *crucial* to Aboriginal women's ways of knowing and of being within community and within the world. It is the lives that Aboriginal women live within communities that nourish Aboriginal women in our ability to theorise about our lives. Aboriginal women's broader experiences are essential in the analysis of their experiences of and access to health care and education, our engagement in employment and indeed all areas of Aboriginal women's lives. This means an analysis needs to be grounded in the everyday lives of Aboriginal women. We cannot possibly understand the issues of Aboriginal women's lives without Aboriginal women's articulations and an understanding of the experiences of Aboriginal women. Ask yourself, why should Aboriginal women be burdened with fighting for rights that are inherently ours as Indigenous peoples and as human beings?

## Starting the Talk

Aboriginal women who live within the Rockhampton area of the Central Queensland region were interviewed as part of a research project exploring how the relationship between health services and Aboriginal women can be more empowering from the viewpoints of Aboriginal women (See Fredericks, 2003). The assumption underpinning this study was that empowering and re-empowering practices for Aboriginal women can lead to improved health outcomes. The focus of the study arose from discussions with Aboriginal women in the community as to what they wanted me, another Aboriginal woman, to investigate as part of a formal research project. The terms empowering and re-empowering were raised through these early exploratory discussions. They were later discussed during the interviews. Re-empowerment was discussed from the viewpoint that Aboriginal women were once empowered as sovereign women who had control of all aspects of their lives. Aboriginal women became disempowered as a result of colonisation and thus the term re-empowering was discussed and agreed upon.

The ethics process included presentations before an Indigenous inter-agency meeting of over 50 representatives from community organisations and Indigenous work units; an Aboriginal women's meeting; and an individual organisation that was recognised as having specific responsibility for women's issues. This was in addition to the university ethics process. A panel of supervisors oversaw the project, including an Aboriginal woman recognised for her long-term involvement in Aboriginal women's activism. She was nominated by other Aboriginal women in the community as the appropriate person to be a cultural supervisor and to assist in any cultural dilemmas. She worked with the other two supervisors who additionally provided specific research roles within the university environment. Twenty Aboriginal women participated in in-depth semi-structured, face-to-face interviews in a participatory-action research process, which incorporated the principles of an Indigenous methodology as put forward by Rigney (2001) and decolonising concepts asserted by Smith (1999). In addition, the process drew heavily from the field of ethnography (Bowling, 1997; Creswell, 1998) Ethnographic data collection as understood from the writings of Creswell can include documents, observations and interviewing. The benefits of ethnography allow for interviewees to provide "rich and quotable material" and "enable them to give their opinions in full on more complex topics" (Bowling, p. 231). Moreover, it allows for concepts of reciprocity and reactivity to be enacted within the research process and for the researcher to be immersed in the day-to-day lives of the members of the research group (Creswell). For me as a member of the Rockhampton Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community at that time, this was imperative.

## Kay's Voice

Kay is an Aboriginal woman and at the time the interviews took place, Kay was 46 years old. She moved to the Rockhampton area in 1995. She has two sons. She has been married and divorced. She has a partner. Kay has lived in a range of places during her

lifetime. As a child she was removed from her Aboriginal mother and raised by non-Indigenous people. Kay was not always able to name whom she belongs to in terms of placement, but she now can, and talks about her journey to others. She has studied at university and works. Kay and her partner have been buying their home for the past 6 years.

I have selected parts of Kay's story to feature in more of a case study approach to demonstrate a range of issues connected with Aboriginal women's lives past and present. Her story demonstrates how colonisation, discrimination and racism have been enacted at the coalface of everyday life. Furthermore it demonstrates that life today for many Aboriginal women is lived as colonised peoples who continue to be subjected to racism and kept impoverished by policies and behaviours that have their origins in history. She demonstrates through her words ways that Aboriginal women try to deal with the historical and present day issues. Her words outline how Aboriginal women come to know ourselves and how we compare when we look at the health statistics and life reality of non-Aboriginal people. This knowing ourselves and knowing the non-Indigenous 'Other' is part of our reality.

*When I think about my own health issues, you're hitting that statistic now, it could be good-bye anytime, we are all reminded of that all the time', cause our mates are passing away, and you think, well, they were the same age as me, I am 46, and I am coming up to the time which tells us most black fellas don't make it after this ... it is something that when you reach 40, this is, hit the hump and start heading down hill and white people hit 60 and think they hit the hump* (Kay).

Kay referred specifically to women's services and stated in reference to one specific service, *"I go there but I never feel comfortable there, I don't go there as a client. I really do like women's spaces but this space doesn't make me feel like it is for me, it is a woman's space I feel that, it's not an Aboriginal woman's space, the design of the space, it is a totally white designed space. There is nothing that identifies me to that place ... I just won't go there as a client because I don't feel they cater for me as a black woman".* She came back to the point later in her interview when she was discussing notions of place, in reference to that specific service *"there was no Aboriginality around the place, I didn't see black people, I didn't see black workers, I didn't see any posters either ... that kind of says its not a place for me, maybe that's an assumption but all of the things ...that's how I gauge whether it wants me to be part of its centre".* Kay's expression of whether she feels included or not as part of the core is evident. She feels she is not.

In her discussion around accessing health services generally, Kay described how she accessed services and identified a place as to whether "*I'm just going to be sitting on the fringes as I have all my life, I don't want to be, I want to find places where I can be part of the centre ...".* She identified the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health service as a place where Aboriginality is part of the centre, part of the thinking of the place and where she was not going to be left on the fringe as an Aboriginal woman. Kay argued that part of the difficulty with the health system and broader systems (education, society at large) was the centre that it operated from as its base. She means the ideology and foundation when she refers to the centre. She articulated that, *"I want the white system to understand that we are not part of the white centre, we are on the fringe, we have not been included into that centre, and we won't until the white system sees that".*

In her interview, Kay referred to the ancestors throughout, linking the past to the present and to the future. Kay revealed that she is very much aware of her life span issues and her past health problems. She stated, *"I am real proud of myself that I make sure my sons visit the doctors to have a check up, I try not to show them any of my fear". "I don't want to be sick. I don't have grandchildren yet ... I want to be around to see a couple of grandchildren at least ... I ask the ancestors all the time to gift me that I can live".* Kay also demonstrated that she was very much aware of her reality in terms of the health status statistics for Aboriginal women, Aboriginal peoples and non-Indigenous people. The quote I used from Kay at the commencement of this section is evidence of her awareness and her sense of the reality that Aboriginal women have shorter life expectancies. All the women I interviewed had a sense of the realities of their lives in relation to other Aboriginal women, Aboriginal people and the broader population. They additionally had a collective sense of the issues of the Aboriginal people that were in the generation/s before them and the generations of Aboriginal people that are following their lives.

Kay discussed how she presents to people can often lead to misinterpretations of her and her needs at the time. *"I know that I present, I try to present to the community as a woman whose got it together. I try not to come from a place of victim".* Kay explained that she wants people to understand that *"even on the outside if we look like we have got it together, that mightn't be what's happening underneath and that we as Aboriginal peoples can be disempowered in different ways, when that has happened continually, you work up strategies".* Sometimes Kay said, in talking about herself, *"... sometimes I just don't have the energy in my spirit. I have to work up to [it], to have the courage to make the appointment".* It is at these times that we may be viewed "not wanting to come in", "not interested", or "don't see it as important" rather than

understanding there may be issues tied to fear, disempowerment, debilitation and re-traumatisation.

## Conclusion

The arrival of the colonists, and the subsequent removal and dispossession of Aboriginal women from their traditional lands where relationships would be maintained and responsibilities carried out, has had a disastrous effect on Aboriginal women over the years. Through invasion and colonisation, Aboriginal women have experienced different forms of genocide and ethnocide that have attempted to exterminate and assimilate them. We know through these processes that Aboriginal women's lives were disrupted to different degrees, depending on the level of penetration of the colonising dominant society. It is Aboriginal women who understand what has happened from the position of being, of having lived the experiences, having heard the stories and having seen and felt the pain as Aboriginal women. It is through the lives of Aboriginal women such as Kay that we are able to gain an understanding about the dominant culture in order to survive as Aboriginal women. It is Aboriginal women who have been required to gain meaning from and reinterpret the dominant culture, to be able to live within it as an Aboriginal woman.

Aboriginal women are in the centre, in the margins, around and outside the margins in Australian society.

## Acknowledgments

I acknowledge the Aboriginal women in Rockhampton who supported the research work. I acknowledge the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council and Monash University for their support and the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for funding my research fellowship.

## References

Bowling, A. (1997). *Research methods in health investigating health and health services*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design.* London: Sage.

Croft, P. J. (2003). *ARTsong: the soul beneath my skin.* Doctor of Visual Arts thesis unpublished, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane.

Fanon, F. (1971). *The wretched of the earth*. London : Penguin.

Fredericks, B. (2003). *"Us Speaking about Women's Health": Aboriginal women's perceptions and experiences of health, wellbeing, identity, body and health services.* PhD thesis unpublished. Central Queensland University, Rockhampton.

Hage, G. (1998). *White nation fantasies of white supremacy in a multicultural society.* Annadale: Pluto Press.

Huggins, J. (1994). A contemporary view of Aboriginal women's relationship to the White women's movement, in N. Grieve and A. Burns (Eds.) *Australian women and contemporary feminist thought (*pp. 70-79). South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

James, S. M., & Busia, A. P. A. (1993). *Theorizing black feminisms: The visionary pragmatism of black women*. London: Routledge.

Moreton-Robinson, A. (2000). *Talkin' up to the White women: Indigenous women and feminism.* St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Rigney, L-R. (2001). A first perspective of Indigenous Australian participation in science: Framing Indigenous research towards Indigenous Australian intellectual sovereignty. *Kaurna Higher Education Journal*, 7, 1-13.

Smith L, (1999). *Decolonising methodologies research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Watson, I. (1998). The power of Muldarbi and the road to its demise. *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 8, March, 39-59.

# Serendipity and the Art of a Balanced Life

**Carroll M. Graham (cgraham@usyd.edu.au)**
Faculty of Pharmacy
The University of Sydney, Sydney NSW 2006 Australia

### Abstract

This paper presents a reflection on my community involvement and its influence on my work within the higher education sector during the last decade. My life-philosophy has been greatly influenced by community involvement with Girl Guides, and I have integrated this community involvement with my professional life, creating opportunities to develop and implement community engagement programs in the three different NSW universities in which I have worked. Key factors important to success have been: achieving a sustainable balance and integration in "employment, education and everything"; development of networks; recognising and making the most of serendipitous opportunities; and the ability to engage others. The paper reflects on the programs I have developed, foreshadows the community engagement programs that I am currently initiating in my new workplace, and relates these to the strategic directions of my faculty and university, and to government legislation.

## Introduction

This paper is a result of having to put my money where my mouth is. When I learned of this conference earlier this year, I was intrigued by its theme, *Education, Employment and Everything... the triple layers of a woman's life,* but was surprised to find, when investigating the sub-topics, that community involvement or community engagement had not been included. When I contacted the conference organisers about this matter, I was quickly asked if I would contribute on this topic.

The writing of this paper has provided a serendipitous opportunity for personal reflection on my community involvement, my work-life balance, and how my personal community engagement has had an influence on my work. I have worked in the higher education sector for the last 10 years, having started professional life as an electrical engineer. I have three (now almost adult) children, one of whom has a disability, and I have juggled work, family, education and community commitments for the last 20 or more years. My philosophy has been greatly influenced by my community involvement with Girl Guides, and I have worked to integrate this community involvement with my professional life. As a result, I have managed to create opportunities to develop and implement community engagement programs in the three different NSW universities in which I have worked.[12]

## Women's Involvement in Volunteer Community Activities

Historically, women have contributed substantially to community activities outside their own homes. Despite the common belief that women's participation in volunteer community organisations is declining (Warburton & Oppenheimer, 2000), comparable figures from Australian surveys indicate the participation rate of women in volunteer work has increased from 24.4% in 1995 to 37.6% in 2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). However, it is true that more women are volunteering fewer hours each: during the same period, the median number of annual hours spent in volunteer work by females fell from 74 to 56 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). This poses a management challenge to many volunteer organisations that is outside the scope of this paper to discuss.

The importance of this volunteer work is significant. Women spent 379.7 million hours in volunteer work in 2006 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). De Vaus, Gray, and Stanton (2003) estimated that the value of unpaid work contributed by females *outside* their own households averaged $2,152 per head in 1997. Based on the methodology used by De Vaus et al., the total value of this 1997 volunteer community work was more than $15 billion. This estimate does not include less quantifiable benefits to the community, such as increased self-esteem and the development of teamwork and leadership skills in our youth, through participation in youth groups led by women.

## Influences of Community Involvement Experiences

My involvement with Guides fits well with this conference and its aims. Girl Guides Australia provides a non-formal, values-based education program that helps "girls and young women grow into confident, self-respecting, responsible community members" (Guides Australia, n.d.a). It provides women and girls

[12] This paper does not represent the views of any of the institutions or organisations mentioned. It expresses my personal opinions and views only, and any errors or inconsistencies reside entirely with me.

with a strong network, from the local to international level. Along with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, Guides deals with issues of concern for girls and women, and in doing so, provides a global voice for girls and young women (Guides Australia, n.d.b; WAGGGS, n.d.).

As a Guide Leader, my role is to work with adults — other Guide Leaders — rather than with the Guides themselves. Over the last 16 years, I have provided support and leadership to the Leaders in a variety of ways, including administrative support, guidance and mentoring, skills training and practical support (such as sourcing and developing resources that other Leaders can use with the Guides). In doing so, I have gained skills, knowledge, networks and understanding that I have been able to use in both my personal and professional life. Community engagement is an important aspect in Guiding — for our youth members it takes the form of community service, while for me it was demonstrated through the building of a bridge, a project for which I engaged support of the Army Reserve Engineers, the Australian Defence Forces, the NSW Rural Fire Brigade, Sutherland Shire Council engineers, politicians — local, state and federal, the local community and our parent body, Guides NSW.

## Developing Leadership Skills

Some of the skills I have developed through Guiding have, perhaps obviously, been leadership skills. This is a skill area that does not come naturally to me, and I have worked hard over several years to develop the skills needed to lead adults — skills that I can transfer to my workplace role of manager. Recently, I have taken the opportunity to participate in a leadership program based in my workplace (The University of Sydney, 2007a), part of which involved completion of the Life Styles Inventory (LSI). Briefly, the LSI is a tool that helps to identify and compare constructive styles — personal, management and leadership — with less-effective styles (Doucouliagos & Sgro, 2000). In reviewing the outcomes of the LSI, I was pleased to find that others in my workplace rate highly the positive, constructive styles of my behaviours. I have no doubt that development of these positive skills has resulted from my involvement in Guides. On a lighter note, at UNSW I was always in demand for tying up the banners needed for open days, being the only person in my unit who was able to tie knots that would stay fastened for the duration of the event!

## Key Projects

More generally, I have been able to build on my Guide networks, and use my ability to engage others, to initiate, develop and sustain or support a range of community engagement projects in the universities in which I have worked. Table 1 provides an overview of these projects.

Some projects that I have introduced into my workplaces have had a direct connection to Guides, such as the Guides in Engineering and Science Saturday at the University of Wollongong, which provides a full-day workshop offering hands-on activities to Guides in Year 5 and above (aged approximately 10 to 17 years). The Guides work in groups, supervised by Guide Leaders, to complete four hands-on activities. Guides taking part in a workshop satisfy the requirements for the Guide badge "Explore-A-Challenge Science and Technology". In 2006, this initiative received funding

Table 1: Community engagement programs.

| Program | Institution |
|---|---|
| Anita Borg Workshops for Primary School Girls | UNSW |
| Computer Science Co-op Program | UNSW |
| Industrial Placement Program | UNSW |
| LEGO Robotics Workshops for school students | UNSW |
| LEGO Robotics Workshops for teachers | UNSW |
| Robocup Junior | UNSW |
| Robocup | UNSW |
| Harmony Day | UNSW |
| Associations Market Day | UNSW |
| High School Programming Competition | UNSW |
| Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer and Winter Schools | UNSW |
| Junior Scientia Program | UNSW |
| Guides in Engineering and Science Saturday | University of Wollongong |
| Harmony Day | The University of Sydney |
| Timor Leste Pharmacy Group | The University of Sydney |
| *Proposed* Indigenous Australian Pharmacy Summer School | The University of Sydney |

through the University of Wollongong's Community Engagement Grants Scheme (University of Wollongong, 2007a).

Other programs, such as the Computer Science Co-op Program, have been a more formal part of my job and not directly connected to my involvement with Guides; nevertheless, these projects have benefited from the skills I have gained as a Guide Leader. For example, I introduced a series of workshops for the Co-op Scholars to help prepare these students for their first industrial placement. The knowledge and skills I gained through both the Certificate IV in Outdoor Recreation and the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, which I had completed for Guides, along with the experience I had gained in running training workshops for Guide Leaders, added value to the workshops I devised and ran for the Co-op Scholars.

One satisfying aspect of these programs has been to see them continue after I have left the organisation. Essential to the implementation and on-going success of these programs has been engaging others through the development of a clear shared vision for the programs, building the capacity in others for delivering the programs, creating and demonstrating early successes for the programs and reinforcing the programs by evaluating and improving the programs. By successfully completing these steps, the community engagement programs have been embedded in each university. For example, in the case of the Anita Borg Workshops for Primary School Girls (Webster, Mancilla, Graham, Woo, & Marcus, 2006), I created a vision for the program by writing an outline of the program, including relevant research data, a mapping of the workshop outcomes to the upper primary science and technology curriculum, and a clear proposal for the program's continuation. Using this outline as a basis for engagement, I was able to gain the support of the Head of School and Dean, school principals, industry sponsors and student facilitators. I built the capacity of facilitators by developing and running training workshops, which has subsequently allowed others to deliver the program. Early successes were reported to relevant staff and students, and the wider community through the alumni magazine and primary school magazines. Finally, at the conclusion of each workshop, the girls completed a workshop evaluation, which was used in more general evaluations, resulting in on-going improvements.

## Community Engagement and the University

In considering, both for this paper and for earlier research for my Master's degree, community engagement at the different universities in which I have worked, I discovered that these institutions take different approaches to their vision for and implementation of community engagement. For example, the University of Wollongong has community engagement enshrined in its Governing Act (AustLii, 2006a), which has led to "a long and documented history of successful community engagement" (AUQA, 2006, p.41). The University's commitment to community engagement has been articulated in its strategic planning since the first strategic plan was released in 1992 (AUQA), and community engagement is now considered a "core function" of the university (University of Wollongong, 2007). This commitment is demonstrated by the establishment of the Office of Community and Partnerships, its Community Engagement Grants Scheme (for staff and students initiating community engagement projects), publication of its Community Engagement Newsletter, and the establishment of the Innovation Campus, to name just a few programs. Recognition of this wide range of community engagement activities was made in 2006 when the University of Wollongong received the "Commonwealth University of the Year" award for community engagement (The Times Higher Education Supplement, 2006).

In contrast, the strategic commitment to community engagement is less clearly articulated by UNSW and The University of Sydney. Like the University of Wollongong, UNSW and The University of Sydney both have community engagement mentioned in their acts of establishment (AustLii, 2006b; AustLii, 2006c), yet neither appears to promote this fact. In the UNSW Strategic Plan 2005, UNSW specifies four university-level community-related "common priority goals" (UNSW, 2005, p.8) and a number of faculty-level community engagement goals. In addition, a significant number of community engagement programs flourish at the Faculty, School or Centre level. In acknowledgement of these activities, it appears that, from February 2007, service, including community engagement, is one path for academic promotion (UNSW, 2007).

The University of Sydney defines community engagement and outreach as one of "four core areas" (The University of Sydney, 2006, p.2) for reform. . In 2006, the first Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Community) was appointed, to oversee the portfolio of community engagement. The division of Community Engagement is responsible for a broad range of University activities, many of which "focus on the wider community and develop the image of the University externally" (The University of Sydney, 2007b). However, in comparison to the University of Wollongong, which has a direct link from the homepage on its website to its community engagement web pages, it is considerably more difficult to navigate to the community engagement pages of either UNSW or The University of Sydney. Within my

own faculty, the Faculty of Pharmacy, there is considerable community engagement on an academic level. For example, in 2007 we expect to manage over 630 student practicum placements with some 270 clinical supervisors in the broader industry. In addition, events for prospective students, currently run twice each semester, provide hands-on activities for selected groups of senior high school students. It is my plan to build on these activities to create new opportunities for both our current and prospective students.

## Juggling Balls and Spinning Plates

Achieving a balance between work and non-work commitments has been challenging, but also very rewarding. Over the years, I have spent many hours in my work with Guides. For five years, between 2000 and 2004, it was almost a second job. During this period in particular, it was essential for me to find ways to balance work, family and my community involvement. Serendipitously, UNSW's "Additional Leave & Equalisation of Salary", was introduced in October 2000, and I made the most of the opportunity to use this scheme. This scheme allowed me to take extra leave during a calendar year, on a proportionally reduced salary, without reduction in benefits such as superannuation or long service leave accrual. I commenced this scheme in 2001, and was one of the first UNSW employees to do so. I was able to continue to take an additional 4 or 5 weeks each year up until I left UNSW during 2005. The additional leave allowed me to take holidays when my children were on school holidays, and to participate in Guide activities, such as local, state, national and international Guide camps.

Fulfilment, in my experience, derives from creating an integrated life, rather than having work, family and community as separate compartments. It has been critically important to recognise and make the most of serendipitous opportunities, and to see and act on the links between different aspects of my life. The ability to achieve a sustainable balance has derived from developing networks and engaging others, not the least of whom has been my supportive husband and children.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Associate Professor Greg Ryan, who provided support and encouragement during the writing of this paper, to Professor Iqbal Ramzan for encouraging my participation at this conference, and to Bronwyn Evans for assistance with proofreading.

## References

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2007*). Voluntary work, Australia, 2006*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

Australian Universities Quality Agency [AUQA]. (2006). *Report of an audit of the University of Wollongong, Audit report number 35*. Retrieved 29 July 2007 from: http://www.auqa.edu.au/quality audit/sai_reports/reports/auditreport_uow_2006.pdf.

Australasian Legal Information Institute [AustLii]. (2006a). *University of Wollongong Act 1989*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ uowa1989316.

Australasian Legal Information Institute [AustLii]. (2006b). *University of New South Wales Act 1989*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ uonswa1989364/.

Australasian Legal Information Institute [AustLii]. (2006c). *University of Sydney Act 1989*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/ legis/nsw/consol_act/uosa1989278.

De Vaus, D., Gray, M., & Stanton, D. (2003). *Measuring the value of unpaid household, caring and voluntary work of older Australians*. Melbourne: Commonwealth of Australia.

Doucouliagos, C., & Sgro, P. (2000). *Enterprise return on a training investment*, Adelaide: NCVER.

Guides Australia. (n. d. a). *About us*. Retrieved 29 July 2007 from: http://www.guidesaus.org.au/ page.php?pageid=19.

Guides Australia. (n. d. b). *World association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)*. Retrieved 29 July 2007 from: http://www.guidesaus.org.au/ page.php?pageid=27.

The Times Higher Education Supplement. (2007). *The Times Higher Awards 2006*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.thes.co.uk/Awards/2006/.

The University of Sydney. (2006). *Strategic directions 2006-2010*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.usyd.edu.au/about/publication/strategic/ 2006/strategic_directions_2006_2010.pdf

The University of Sydney. (2007a). *Senior leaders' program*, University of Sydney. Retrieved 29 July 2007, from: http://www.usyd.edu.au/sydneylearning/ leadership/senior_leaders/index.shtml

The University of Sydney. (2007b). *Community engagement*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.usyd.edu.au/about/organisation/pub/ communications.shtml

University of Wollongong. (2006). *2006 project recipients*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.uow.edu.au/about/community/cegs/ UOW015731.html

University of Wollongong. (2007a). *2006 project recipients: Community engagement grants scheme*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.uow.edu.au/about/community/cegs/ UOW015731.html

University of Wollongong. (2007b). *University plans 2005-2007*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.uow.edu.au/planquality/strategicplan/

UNSW. (2005). *UNSW strategic plan 2005*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.unsw.edu.au/about/pad/UNSW Strategic Plan.pdf

UNSW. (2007). *Academic promotions – applicant toolkit*. Retrieved 30 July 2007 from: http://www.hr.unsw.edu.au/employee/acad/ap_toolkit.pdf

Warburton, J., & Oppenheimer, M. (2000). *Volunteers and volunteering.* Sydney: The Federation Press.

Webster, S., Mancilla, B., Graham, C., Woo, D., & Marcus, N. (2006). Anita Borg workshop for primary school girls. In J. Fisher (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 10th Australian Women in IT Conference (AusWIT 2006)*. Adelaide, SA, Australia, 4-5 December.

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts [WAGGGS]. (no date). *Welcome*. Retrieved 29 July 2007 from: http://www.wagggs.org/en/home.

# How Flexible Working Formats Affect Work-life Balance: The Contribution of Telework to the Quality of Life for Working Women in Japan

**Mayumi Hori (m.hori@hakuoh.ac.jp)**
Graduate School & Faculty of Business Administration
Hakuoh University , Tochigi 323-8585 Japan

**Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to cast some useful light on promoting work-life balance through a flexible work-format, namely telework for working women in a ubiquitous network society. I will introduce the situation and the problems of Japanese working women by comparing with women's work situations in some other countries Though women in Japan have begun to participate in a range of social and economic activities, the equality of men and women, however, has not been fully achieved. There are still barriers that have traditionally and historically excluded women from particular jobs or impeded their upward progression. Many women today are still limited to clerical work and conventional support positions. The increasing presence of women in the Japanese workforce suggests a general tendency of changing power relationships in social situations and family. The growing interest in telework from women as well as men implies that there are potential and significant benefits in teleworking. Especially for married women, working at home reduces or integrates their responsibilities for job and family as they are enabled to work and spend part or all their work time at home. Many women prefer to keep their job along with housework and child-rearing responsibilities. Telework allows women to create favourable and flexible working arrangements, thus, it is a new way to improve quality of life for Japanese women through providing work opportunity.

## Introduction

Low birthrate, a rapidly increasing aged population, globalisation of the economy and business, and development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have produced mega trends that are forcing Japanese organisations to review and revise some traditional employment practices that were once the strengths of Japanese companies during the period of high economic growth. The trends are having a strong impact on the labour environment. Combined with an increased presence of women in the workforce, they are forcing organisations to alter their traditional practice in which women play only a supporting role. Many organisations are now seriously exploring the potential of women as integral members of the team. The progress and popularisation of ICT has created a major impact on Japanese working environment. Telework, which is not yet commonly practised in Japan, has attracted a great deal of attention from Japanese women in recent years for its potential to enhance the utilisation of females in the workforce. Telework has realised a new employment style free from the conventional fixed working time and place. In Japan, most women, particularly those who live in rural areas still subject to the traditional belief that women should stay at home. Telework holds the promise of increasing job opportunities for women who still bear the burden of housework and childcare by creating favourable and flexible working arrangements, potentially improving the quality of life for Japanese women.

## The State of Working Conditions in Japan

The number of females in employment is 22,770,000 which accounts for 48.5 % of all employees (White paper for Working Women in Japan, 2006).The number of female employees aged 35 and over has increased remarkably, accounting for 62.8% of the total number of female employees. The trend of increasing female labour force participation rates in the industrialised countries continues. Especially in Japan, couples are marrying later, women are getting more education, more women place a higher priority on work than family, and many other attitudes toward work support the increase.

In Japan, female employees are found working mainly in service industries, such as wholesaling and retailing, food services, banking, insurance and other services. However, an increasing number of female workers who have been educated at university and graduate school now want to perform core functions in companies and other organisations.

Correspondingly, part-timers and other non-regular workers have increased in both women and men. This trend is particularly obvious for female employees. The ratio of female part-timers has increased rapidly from 31.9 % in 1985 to 52.4 % in 2005. The ratio of part-time workers to all employed females is expected to go on increasing in the future (Hori, 2003; Labour Force Survey.1985-2005).

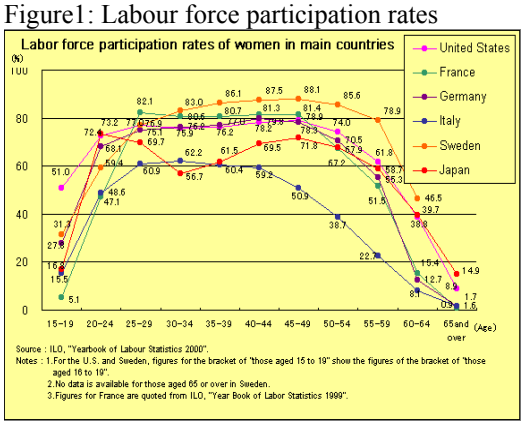
In spite of this trend, there are still women who experience sex discrimination in the work place where traditional concepts of gender roles persist. However, with changing social and economic environments, the

society is now more accepting of women in the work force and is making more use of their ability. For instance, many companies have improved the personnel system to comply with equal employment for men and women.

Looking at the female workforce in Japan by age, there is clearly a strong tendency for Japanese women to drop out during the child-rearing years. In other words, the work cycle for women is an M-curve. The curves of women's labour force participation ratios have "M" forms with peaks for those aged 20 to 24 and those aged 45 to 49 and with a bottom in those aged 30 to 34 during the childbearing and child raising years (Figure 1). This low participation rate for women between 30-34 which is a feature of the Japanese female workforce, is inconsistent with that of other advanced countries which draws a trapezoid shaped curve. That is to say that many Japanese women enter the workforce as permanent employees after graduating from college or university. However, after marriage they tend to leave their jobs to give birth and raise children. Once the children reach the ages of 4-9 years old, Japanese women prepare to return to the workforce, many of them only in a part-time status. If women were able to return to full time work, then the “M” form would change into a trapezoid, which is similar to the form observed in industrial countries (Hori & Ohashi, 2005a; 2005b).

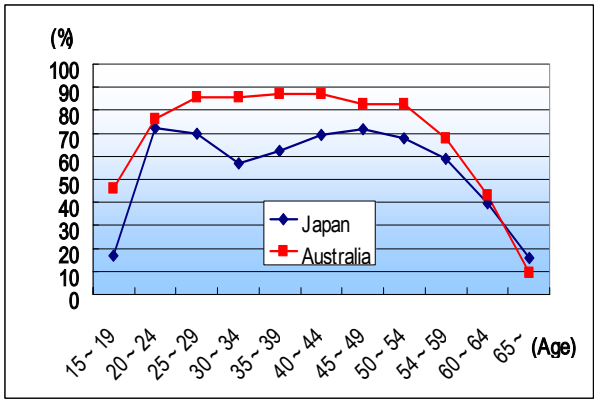
The U.S.A in the 1960s, the United Kingdom until the early 1990s and even Sweden were similarly reflecting the M-curve (ILO, 1989). But in recent decades, the M-curve has been disappearing in most of the advanced Western industrial countries while Japan still shows it. However, the bottom of M-curve is inching up, as is the drop-out age. For example, in 1975 the low point for women in the labour force was well down in the age group between 25 and 29. By 1998, it was in the age group between 30 and 39. As more couples marry later than ever, as more women are receiving higher education, and more women are placing a higher priority on work than family it is clear that many attitudes toward work have been changing.

Figure1: Labour force participation rates




Comparing women’s labour forces in Japan and Australia, there is a quite obvious difference (Figure2). While Australian female workers can keep working during child rearing, Japanese women have to decide on which course to take - work or family.

Figure2: Women’s Labour force participation rates: Japan & Australia (1999)




Source: Australia Statistics Bureau 2000, White paper on working women, 2000.

## Backgrounds of Labour in Japan

### Change the Population Structure in Japan: Childbirth and Old Age

Post-war socioeconomic changes have had an astonishing impact on Japanese lifecycle. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare’s (MHLW) Survey of Attitudes on the Falling Birthrate (MHLW, 2005), the number of births dropped to 1.11million in 2004. Their report suggested that the fall in the fertility rate in the 1990s was due to couples having less children as well as people delaying marriage or remaining single. The number of people who say that they will never marry is relatively low, about 6 % for both sexes. Loss of own free time, concern about restriction of behaviour, loss of spending money, and complications of relationships with in-laws, are the major concerns about marriage for men and women. Marriage is becoming less financially attractive because women are now better educated and financially independent. Many think a single life more convenient. Since the post-war baby boom, the total fertility rate has rapidly fallen to 2.22 in 1956, 1.91 in 1975, and in 2004 reaching the lowest at 1.29.

The Annual Report on the Aging Society (Cabinet Office, Japan, 2004) reported that in 2003, the population aged 65 and over was 24.31 million, among which 10.26 million were male. The percentage of the elderly to the total population was 19.0%. Of the total elderly population, the younger-elderly population (65-74) was 13.76 million, while the older-elderly

population (75 or older) was 10.55 million. The national population aged 100 and over has exceeded 20,000 as of September 2003, doubling in only five years. It is estimated that the elderly population will continue to increase rapidly until 2020 and stabilise thereafter. On the other hand, the total population is decreasing, while the percentage of the elderly is estimated to continue increasing, and to reach 26.0% in 2015 and 35.7% in 2050.

These trends are becoming serious problems that Japanese society will be forced to deal with. In these circumstances, if workers are to have fulfilling work throughout their lifetime, it is extremely important to improve the working environment to allow them to have a good balance of working, raising children and caring for the elderly.

## Child-care Leave and Family-care Leave

The main difficulties which prevent women from staying in the workforce are: Child care (76.3%), care for elderly or sick family members (53.8%), child's education (21.2%), housekeeping (33.2%), husbands' transfer (20.7%), objection or lack of understanding by families (28.6%), health condition of her own (28.2%), workplace custom of retirement at marriage or childbirth (35%), discriminatory treatment in promotion, training, and so on (17.25), perception that women will retire soon or that their capability is inferior (27.5%) (Economic Planning Agency, 1996).

Male-female ratio of those who claimed family care leave is 18.7% to 81.3%, and the male-female rate of taking care leave 0.8% to 99.2%.The percentage of workplaces which have introduced measures for shortening working hours was 9.2%, but the figure rises to 37.7% for workplaces which replied that they had a family-care leave system. The workplace measures included reduced working hours (81.2%), flexitime system for family care (16.8%), change to the start and end of work (36.8%), and aid to expenses for family care (5.4%) (Ministry of Labour, 1996).

## The New Work Format: Telework

Women in Japan have traditionally been limited to clerical work and conventional support positions. In today's work environment, factors such as fewer children, more elderly, and other changes in social structure as well as increasing educational levels and social effectiveness among women are encouraging government agencies and companies to look seriously at ways to actively engage the full talents of women. To put it another way, these factors are demanding changes in the traditional ideas about "women's work". It is no longer simply assumed that women must carry full responsibility for housework and childcare or that the support function is the only appropriate role for women in a company. Furthermore, with ever-higher levels of academic achievement, more women are looking for jobs that make use of their special expertise and allow for long-term employment (Hori, 2001, Hori & Ohashi, 2005a).

In addition to the attitudinal changes among women, the ICT revolution, which has brought far greater flexibility in terms of time and place, is expanding job alternatives and promoting the employment opportunities for female workers. In fact, ICT is not merely increasing the number of jobs but creating entirely new types of jobs. Utilizing ICT, telework is a new working format with enormous potential for revolutionising conventional work and employment formats. Telework has realised a new employment style free from the conventional fixed working time and place. In Japan, telework provides opportunities for women – particularly those in rural areas who still live with the traditional belief that women should stay at home – to bridge the gap between traditional life and working opportunities. These flexible working arrangements may be able to improve the quality of life for Japanese women.

According to the White Paper of Telework (Japan Telework Association, 2007), telework was started around Los Angeles to ease air pollution reducing private commuting in the United States in 1970s. The idea of using a telecommunication highway instead of a highway of asphalt was put out with the expansion of the telecommunication network in the latter half of 1980s. In addition, it was seen as a lesson learned following the San Francisco earthquake and the Northridge earthquake. Many telework centres were installed by the government as a diversification of risks and a counter-measure protecting administration and enterprise from further large-scale disasters. Telework has operated in Japan since the 1980s and has proved an effective means to achieve work life balance. Moreover, it brings contributions to productivity improvement along with decreases in office and conventional management costs (Japan Telework Association, 2007).

From the social viewpoint, telework will be able to ease the extreme concentration in the metropolitan area and bring about local revitalisation through employment and increased social participation among women and senior citizens. Additional merits of telework are as follows:

1. Expected effects for managers
-Improvement of operating effectiveness and productivity
-Acquisition of talent and new knowledge
-Reduction in office costs
2. Expected effects for employed
-Improvement of productivity and efficiency of work
-Decrease in physical and mental load of commuting
-Communications at home.

-More private time
3. Expected effects for society
-Easing of urban problem
-Local revitalisation
-Creation of jobs and new industries
-Reduction of global environment load
-Reform of community structure

In 2005, the population of teleworkers was 6,740,000 (10.4% of all workers) compared with 4,080,000, (6.1% of all workers) in 2002. (Ministry of Land Infrastructure and Transport, 2006). The Japanese Government is supporting the telework population aiming at increasing it by 20% by 2010.

## New Model of Telework

Today's information and communication technology (ICT) trend, "Web2.0" has increasingly gained attention. In the Web2.0 era, there are some possibilities to create an innovative business world beyond imagination by exploring and building the relationship between Web services suppliers and Web users. Entering the Web2.0 era, internet-based services emerge such as social network services (SNS) and Wiki that promote online collaboration and sharing among users. In addition, new business paradigms such as the Long Tail are also attracting attention The Long Tail is also known as statistical distributions or as the "Pareto principle" that is, "the 80-20 rule". This rule is often applied to sales figures, suggesting that 20% of products are responsible for 80% of sales volume. Such data information seems to be approximately correct, and may be helpful in sales, strategic decision-making.

From the viewpoint of human resources, the Long Tail's rule in Web2.0, can be applied to make effective use of the labour force by removing barriers that have traditionally and historically excluded women or physically handicapped people from particular jobs or impeded their upward progression. In Web2.0, the architecture of democratic participation encourages users such as teleworkers both inside and outside of organisations to add innovative knowledge, technology or know-how for creating value. Previously in the Web1.0 era, telework increased work effectiveness in organisations, but in-house telework was no more than outsourcing or computerisation of the administrative operations. In Web2.0, however, telework becomes a system that enables and encourages people with different expertise in different regions to collaboratively exchange their skills and knowledge to positively affect policies and decision-making processes.

The new model of telework is therefore defined as a system that efficiently relates, shares, and utilises data, information, and knowledge in the Ubiquitous Society. The concept is to build a society where diversity is embraced and creativity appreciated. Moreover, it generates online collaboration and sharing among users, thereby allowing workers to pursue their mission in a coordinated manner. The new model of telework may play a significant role in realising a knowledge-based society in the Web2.0 era. Challenging the existing structure of an organisation by adopting telework would assist reviewing of the system and relationships within the organisation. This may lead to the discovery of new connections between different branches of the organisation at the same or different ontological levels. This will enable the appropriate allocation of financial and human resources and avoid bottlenecks. What is more, through efficient coordination and collaboration, organisations will be able to share the know-how and the expertise that each worker possesses. It can also assist group members in creating a shared new value and understanding (Hori & Ohashi, 2006).

In a knowledge-based society, personal knowledge is required to transform into organisational knowledge for the benefit of business and administrative activities. Telework is designed as a knowledge-creation system, which enables and encourages people with different expertise in different regions to collaboratively develop new knowledge and positively affect policies and decision-making processes. A new working format, e-work centring on telework, has emerged. This new format has enabled people to choose alternative working styles. Telework also generates innovative ways to make effective use of human resources both in-house and outside staffing through ICT.

## Conclusion

Telework with the development of ICT has a potential to diminish traditional boundaries that had long been a burden to Japanese women and to build a more flexible "small-world" network in which people with different expertise can share their high-quality knowledge and collaborate toward common goals. Telework has emerged as a new work format that is critical to building a collaborative society for the 21st Century knowledge -based society.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Ms Dorothy Bramston for her help in reviewing this paper.

## References

Cabinet Office, Japan. (2004). *The annual report on the aging society.*

Economic Planning Agency. (1996). *Preference survey on national life.*

Hori, M. (2003), *Society of telework and working for women,* Tokyo: Chuo University Publishing.

Hori, M. (2001), *The Development of IT and a New Work Format for Women in Japan, Proceedings of t-*

*world 2001, The 8th International Assembly on Telework, 231 Labour Policy Studies*, R. Suomi (Ed.), Ministry of Labour Finland.

Hori, M., & Ohashi, M. (2006), *Knowledge creation and adaptive collaboration based on XML web services, knowledge and technology management*. In G. D. Puntnik, & M. M. Manuela Chuha, (Eds.). *Virtual organization: Issues, trends, opportunities and solutions,* (pp. 292-305). U.S.A: The Idea Group.

Hori, M., & Ohashi, M. (2005a), *Adaptive collaborative work and XML web services: Benefits of application into information infrastructure and human resources*. in M.W. Guah, & W. L. Currie (Eds.). *Internet strategy: The road to web services solutions* (pp. 86-100). U.S.A: IRM Press.

Hori, M., & Ohashi, M. (2005b). *Applying XML web services into health care management.* Proceedings of the 38th Annual Hawaii Conference on System Science, Hawaii.

ILO, (1989). *Year Book of Labour Statistics*, 1945-1989.

Japan Telework Association. (2007). *White paper on telework*, Accessed http://www.japan-telework.or.jp.

Ministry of Health, Labour & Welfare (MHLW). (2004-2007). *White paper on working women Japan.*

Ministry of Labour. (1996). *Basic survey on women workers' employment management*, Tokyo.

Ministry of Land Infrastructure & Transport. (2006). *The survey of Telework in Japan.*

# Women's Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS: A Global Examination

**Anna Hayes (hayesa@usq.edu.au)**
School of Humanities and Communication
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

In addition to physiological risks, women worldwide face a number of unique vulnerabilities to HIV/AIDS, which are the result of gender inequality. Therefore, in order to adequately respond to HIV/AIDS, such inequalities must be included as an integral part of HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns. This paper considers the influence of gender roles on women's vulnerability to HIV, and also identifies enabling environments that help facilitate transmission of the virus to women. The specific focus of the paper is to identify the social, cultural, economic and political factors that make women more vulnerable to HIV transmission than their male counterparts. Clearly, such information will be useful in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS globally, as well as tackling HIV/AIDS regionally or nationally.

## Women and HIV/AIDS

As the numbers of women worldwide infected with HIV have grown, the role that gender has played in the spread of the disease has drawn increasing attention. In the *Gender and AIDS Almanac*, the influence of gender roles on three main areas of HIV/AIDS vulnerability was examined in the context of knowledge, sexual passivity and aggression, and promiscuity. The almanac defined the term gender roles as "society's expectations of how males and females should look, feel, behave and live", and argued that a society's gender roles can affect the vulnerability of its men and women to HIV transmission (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000, p. 22).

The almanac also proposed the term 'enabling environment' to signify the social, cultural, economic and political factors that contribute to the vulnerability of women to HIV transmission. The enabling environment is essentially any environment which may "facilitate the spread of HIV/AIDS" (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000, p. 26). However, it is also part of the cycle of HIV transmission, because HIV infection can exacerbate the conditions of the enabling environment, which in turn can cause the number of people infected with HIV to increase.

This paper examines the recognised social, cultural and political factors that make women vulnerable to HIV transmission, beginning with sexual health, reproduction and STI knowledge.

## Gender Roles

### Sexual Health, Reproduction and STI Knowledge

Correct knowledge about HIV/AIDS, including the prevention methods and transmission routes of the virus, is an essential part of an effective response to HIV/AIDS. However, for many people worldwide, adequate and correct knowledge about the virus is not accessible. This is particularly true for women.

In many societies worldwide, females (women and girls) lack adequate and correct knowledge to protect themselves against HIV transmission, because many girls and women have little knowledge of sex and reproductive health which is believed to be inappropriate knowledge for them to have. This is often the case because many societies place a high value on women's virginity, purity and faithfulness. Consequently, to have such knowledge outside of marriage is deemed unnecessary, and may even be viewed as indicating sexual activity outside of marriage or a desire to engage in sexual activity prior to marriage (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000). Therefore, the attitudes and behaviours that may heighten a woman's individual risk of contracting HIV are influenced in such a social milieu by gender norms that hinder her knowledge about HIV/STI prevention.

However, even if a woman has gained accurate knowledge about HIV/STI prevention, gender roles and expectations may prevent her from being able to share this knowledge with her husband/partner, or even her ability to apply this knowledge to her current situation. In Thailand, for instance, condoms are generally associated with illicit sex. Thus, even though a woman may know that condoms can prevent HIV transmission, she may be unable to ask her husband/partner to use a condom for fear that her request be seen by her husband/partner as an accusation of him having sex outside of the marriage (Whittaker, 2000).

For other women, male sexual aggression prevents them from using condoms. The fear of violent retribution was identified by women from a range of countries such as Guatemala, Jamaica and Papua New Guinea as being the reason why they did not try to negotiate condom usage with their sexual partners (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000). Furthermore, economic insecurity may render HIV/STI prevention knowledge

to be of little use in situations where men and women are unable to pay for condoms, or when a woman's economic dependence on her husband/partner makes it difficult for her to discuss safer sexual practices with her partner (Irwin, Millen, & Fallows, 2003).

HIV prevention has also been impeded because of the value placed on a woman's virginity. In societies where virginity is revered, many women do not seek out information on sexual or reproductive health for fear that their virginity may be questioned or they may be perceived to be of "easy virtue" (Whelan, 1999). It has also been found that in Latin America and Mauritius, many young women actually engaged in high-risk sexual behaviours such as anal sex or "light sex"[13] that substantially increased their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS in order to protect their virginity and to avoid pregnancy out of marriage. Whelan states that in addition to poor HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention knowledge, another possible reason for this lack of concern could be that in the case of "light sex", the act itself was not believed to be sexual intercourse, because full penetration did not occur. Therefore, because the act was not considered sexual intercourse, "safer sex" was not believed to be necessary (Whelan). This clearly illustrates the very poor levels of sexual health knowledge in such regions.

## Sexual Passivity and Aggression

Women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS is further heightened in societies where women are expected to be passive towards sex. Many societies socialise women to "defer to the sexual pleasure of men" (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000, p. 24). An example of how sexual passivity can heighten women's vulnerability can be clearly seen in sexual interactions where women will undergo high-risk sexual behaviour because they believe it will enhance their partner's pleasure. An example of this is the practice in parts of west, central and southern Africa where women insert external agents such as cleaning powders and herbs into their vaginas, which in turn constricts their vagina and enhances the sexual pleasure of their male partner. The practice is not only damaging to the vagina, but due to the lacerations and inflammation that occur, it significantly increases the woman's chances of contracting HIV (Whelan, 1999).

As mentioned above, anal sex is another example of a high-risk sexual behaviour. It can be linked to both sexual passivity and aggression. While some women may engage in anal sex to protect their virginity, others consent to this practice in order to please their sexual partner. Whelan (1999) states that in interviews conducted among women in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo it was found that many women were pressured by their partners into having anal sex despite their being unwilling to do so. This example highlights the practice of coercive anal sex as both an act of sexual passivity by women and an act of sexual aggression by men.

Women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS is heightened by male sexual aggression because it can often be linked to the occurrence of sexual coercion, non-consensual sex and sexual violence against women. For many women, decisions about their sexual behaviour are denied to them because they are forced into sexual intercourse against their will. This is applicable both inside and outside of committed relationships (Irwin et al., 2003). It is also important to note that women's biological vulnerability to HIV transmission is also increased by violent or coerced sex, due to the damage done to the membranes of the genital area, which helps facilitate HIV infection (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000).

Sexual aggression or gender-based violence against women is also aggravated by war, conflict and economic disruption. Rape as a weapon is increasingly being reported worldwide, as is the abduction and rape of women during times of conflict. The recent conflicts in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia reveal that rape and other forms of sexual violence remain widely entrenched as weapons of war (Whelan, 1999). These examples are strong evidence of the vulnerable status women face in times of instability and conflict.

It has also been estimated that up to two million women worldwide, are trafficked into the sex industry each year, a practice that increases their likelihood of becoming HIV infected (UNAIDS, UNFPA & UNIFEM, 2004). Therefore, the many examples discussed above clearly demonstrate that sexual passivity and aggression are key factors that increase women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS transmission globally.

## Promiscuity

As previously mentioned, many societies hold a double standard whereby female virginity is valued, and male promiscuity is encouraged. Often, this double standard is not just restricted to unmarried people. In many societies, the double standard governing sexual relations means that men are forgiven for sexual transgressions whereas women are still expected to uphold strict sexual purity by staying faithful to their husbands (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000). Thus, if a woman's sexual partner engages in promiscuous behaviour, and unequal gender-based power relations prevent her from being able to negotiate condom use in her relationship, her vulnerability to HIV is increased and her ability to protect herself is denied.

*The Gender and AIDS Almanac* also identifies the stigma and negative connotations often associated with

[13] "Light sex" involves genital contact and penetration to the point of pain.

female promiscuity as being a barrier to effective HIV prevention. Feinstein and Prentice (2000) state that such a barrier exists because people avoid seeking HIV prevention knowledge out of fear of being labelled promiscuous by others. This is largely because of the continued belief that HIV/AIDS is a disease that primarily affects promiscuous people.

Thus, it is important that gender roles are examined when determining the vulnerability of women to HIV/AIDS transmission. However, in addition to gender roles, it is important that enabling environments are also examined because they too play a key role in women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS transmission. The following section examines such enabling environments, beginning with economic factors.

## Enabling Environment

### Economic Factors

Worldwide patterns of HIV infection suggest that HIV/AIDS often affects the most impoverished, and can in turn cause families, communities and nations to become impoverished due to escalating costs of care, medicine and lost earnings. UNAIDS has found that developing countries are home to 95 % of all AIDS cases. Furthermore, adults in developing countries who have low incomes, have higher rates of HIV infection (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000). These results support the assertion that economic factors are a significant influence on HIV vulnerability.

In addition to the above mentioned factors, women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS transmission is also heightened if they lack economic stability, because they are more likely to be dependent on a male partner. This dependence can make it quite difficult for a woman to leave a relationship if she has no other means of support. In addition, economic dependence can affect gender-based power relations within the relationship making safer sex options difficult for the woman to negotiate. As noted above, even if such an option can be negotiated, safer sex may also be compromised by economic factors because both partners may be unable to afford condoms (Irwin et al., 2003).

Economic hardship is also the major motivating factor for many women who exchange sex for money, goods or services. Thus, without adequate economic structures to support those who are economically challenged, the vulnerability of women is heightened as they seek out sexual exchanges to support themselves and other dependents (Irwin et al., 2003).

HIV vulnerability, as a result of economic factors, can also be heightened if men and women are forced to migrate to work. Rural to urban migration is particularly disruptive to families and marriages, and often results in the formation of 'sexual networks in urban areas where there is an unequal ratio of men to women (Whelan, 1999). Unprotected intercourse and multiple sex partners are also common behaviours among men who migrate for labour, which not only increases their own vulnerability to HIV but also the vulnerability of their sexual partners or wives. Labour migration also heightens women's vulnerability to HIV transmission because it can be a contributing factor in women's involvement in the sex trade and because it often separates women from family protection or social support networks that might otherwise protect them from unwanted sexual advances. (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000).

The impact of HIV/AIDS on families and societies has also increased economic hardships for women. In Sub-Saharan Africa, where 28 500 000 people were infected with HIV/AIDS by the end of 2001 (UNAIDS, 2002), women have been expected to carry more of the burden of coping with the social and economic impacts of HIV/AIDS than men. Household work, childcare and caring for the sick have all become demanded of women, as has their income-earning labour (UNAIDS, 2002). While economic factors contribute to the enabling environment for HIV transmission, HIV/AIDS can also cause economic insecurity or poverty. For many people living with HIV/AIDS, its related illnesses cause them to need time off work or to stop working altogether. If that person is the mainstay of the household, or even if their wages are factored into the household's economic security, the lack of income can cause the household to become impoverished. As mentioned above, economic insecurity is a motivating factor for women and children to enter the sex trade. Furthermore, in countries where women are unable to inherit land, access to productive resources and therefore a degree of economic security are often denied to the widows and children of men who have died from HIV/AIDS (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000). Such a fate not only increases their economic vulnerability but their HIV/AIDS vulnerability also. This is again evidence of the strong linkages that exist between economic factors and HIV/AIDS vulnerability.

### Cultural and Social Factors

In addition to affecting economic security, inheritance laws that prevent women from inheriting land are also an example of a cultural practice that contributes to women's HIV vulnerability, and cultural and social factors are considered enabling environments for HIV transmission (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000). However, because they are deeply embedded in a society's belief and value system they can be very difficult to challenge.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a cultural practice that exists in some African countries such as Kenya. It is widespread in most practising countries with the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimating

that seven million out of the fourteen million women in Kenya have undergone FGM (Spinder, Levy, & Connor, 2000). FGM facilitates the transmission of HIV, because it often is performed on numerous girls at the same time, with cutting equipment that is un-sterilised and often reused. So, in addition to mutilating the woman's genitals it also greatly increases her risk of contracting HIV. Male circumcision ceremonies also carry high risk of transmission for the same reasons (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000).

Another example of a cultural factor that facilitates the transmission of HIV is the importance placed on male sexual pleasure that exists in many cultures. It has been stated by Doyal (as cited in Tallis, 2002) that throughout the world male desire is accorded primacy, that is, sex is something performed by men, whereas for women sex is something that happens to them. Hence, male sexual pleasure is elevated above female sexual pleasure often at the expense of the female participant. By according male sexual pleasure primacy, especially when it is to the detriment of the female participant, the HIV/AIDS vulnerability of the woman is significantly increased.

Women's vulnerability to HIV transmission is also increased because of the cultural status motherhood attracts in some societies. For many women, bearing children is the key factor that determines their worth and position within society. Therefore, to use barrier methods of contraception, or to engage in non-penetrative sex to avoid HIV transmission is not culturally acceptable, because it would prevent conception. Infertility increases a woman's vulnerability not only because it lowers her social value, which can affect her economic security and support, but also because in many cultures it enables a man to take a second wife or even divorce his first wife. If the latter occurs, and the woman is unable to remarry, her HIV vulnerability is again heightened because her living conditions may force her to engage in survival sex (Whelan, 1999).

Thus, social and cultural factors can include a myriad of issues and because they are often so embedded within a society they are frequently the most difficult factors to address and require a rigorous response from governments, health departments and the involvement of civil society.

### Political Factors

The final enabling environment that heightens HIV vulnerability identified by Feinstein and Prentice (2000) is the political environment. It has long been determined that government responses, or their lack of responses to HIV can heighten a person's vulnerability to HIV transmission. Fear-driven policies that focus on compulsory testing of vulnerable groups and quarantining or controlling the lives of PLWHA have been proven ineffective, and Whelan (1999) argues that they generate a 'double jeopardy' for women because in addition to sexual discrimination, they then face health-related discrimination.

Whelan (1999) also notes that adolescent vulnerability to HIV is heightened due to political factors because social values generally dictate government policy. Therefore, because in many societies adolescent sex is still viewed as taboo, condoms are often not distributed to youths, meaning a particularly vulnerable group within society can be denied prevention efforts as a direct result of government policy.

The disproportionately small numbers of women who reach decision-making positions in government also influence women's vulnerability to HIV, and reflects the key role governments play in HIV/AIDS responses. This is largely because without an equal representation of women in formulating HIV/AIDS policies, it is likely that such policies will be 'ill-suited' to address women's needs (Feinstein & Prentice, 2000). Therefore, women's equal participation in politics is absolutely essential in ensuring their voices are heard.

Gender-related discrimination in education, employment, access to health care and the sentencing of gender-based violence perpetrators, as well as discriminatory property inheritance and ownership laws also heighten women's vulnerability to HIV transmission (Whelan, 1999). While the latter examples can be directly linked to government policies, the former can also be attributed to government because under the human security framework, equal access to education, employment and healthcare are all identified as the responsibility of governments (UNDP, 1995). Therefore, in countries where such access is unattainable for women, governments must pursue social programmes and initiatives aimed at challenging social and cultural beliefs that cause gender inequality, as well as introducing legislation that both supports and protects the emancipation of women.

## Conclusions

The findings of this paper reinforce the growing realisation worldwide that women and men have different vulnerabilities in terms of HIV transmission, and that these vulnerabilities can be directly related to gender roles and enabling environments. This paper has also identified a number of unique and shared vulnerabilities faced by women globally. The key areas of HIV/AIDS vulnerability not only encompass gender roles such sexual health, reproduction and STI knowledge, but also issues such as sexual passivity and aggression and sexual promiscuity. In addition, enabling environments, that is, the social, cultural, economic and political environment of the state, were also shown to heighten women's vulnerability to

HIV/AIDS. Clearly, such information will be useful in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS globally, as well as tackling HIV/AIDS regionally or nationally.

## Acknowledgments

My thanks go to Professor Donald McMillen (USQ) and Dr Rosemary Roberts (UQ) for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

## References

Feinstein, N., & Prentice, B. (2000). *Gender and AIDS almanac*, viewed 18 February 2003, http://www.unaids.org/gender/docs/Gender%20Package/GenderandAIDSalmanac.pdf.

Irwin, A., Millen, J., & Fallows, D. (2003). *Global AIDS: Myths and facts. Tools for fighting the AIDS pandemic.* Cambridge: South End Press.

UNAIDS. (2002). *Report on the global HIV/AIDS epidemic*. viewed 1 August 2002, http://www.unaids.org/barcelona/presskit/barcelona%20report/Global_estimate.html.

UNAIDS, UNFPA, & UNIFEM. (2004). *Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the crisis*. Viewed 17 September 2004, http://www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/308_filename_women_aids1.pdf#search='unaids%2C%20unfpa%20%26%20unifem'.

UNDP. (1995). Redefining security: The human dimension. *Current History*, *94* (592), 229-36.

Whelan, D. (1999). *Gender and HIV/AIDS: Taking stock of research and programmes.* Key Material, UNAIDS Best Practice Collection, viewed 10 August 2003, http://www.unaids.org/html/pub/publiccations/ircpub05/jc419gendertakingstock_en_pdfpdf#search='gender%20and%20hiv%2Faids%3Ataking%20stock%20of%20research%20and%20programmes'.

Whittaker, A. (2000). *Intimate Knowledge: Women and their health in North-East Thailand*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin.

Spinder, C., Levy, E., & Connor, M. (Eds.). (2000). *With an end in sight: Strategies from the UNIFEM trust fund to eliminate violence against women*. viewed 3 October 2003, http://www.unifem.undp.org.

Tallis, V. (2002). *Gender and HIV/AIDS*, report for BRIDGE development, viewed 24 September 2004, http://www.onlinewomeninpolitics.org/beijing12/CEPHIVreport.pdf.

# Men's Spirituality and Women in Bangladesh Culture

**Amzad Hossain (A.Hossain@murdoch.edu.au)**
**Popie Hossain-Rhaman (litonr@dodo.com.au)**
Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy
Murdoch University, Murdoch WA 6150 Australia

**Abstract**

The paper depicts exoteric (materialistic) and esoteric (spiritualistic) streams of men's spirituality in relation to women in Bangladesh culture that largely spring out of the traditional philosophy of Maya (attachment to worldly affairs and love). Using traditional folklore to support its argument, it claims that Bangladesh's socio-economic and ecological sustainability is largely influenced by the synergies between the two streams of men's spirituality that results in an intense Maya for and dependence on women.

## Introduction

Spirituality is the source of the will to act morally (Smith & Standish, 1997). Thus exercising spirituality is an immanent activity aimed at the affirmation of humans' moral values. In cultural terms, one can see spirituality as a unity of the totality of environmental, socio-political and religious traits, which constitute the cultural tradition and cultural dimensions of a country To the Bauls[14] whose spiritual influence has enormous impact in shaping the Bangladesh culture, men's spirituality is an inner dimension by which men understand their role in relation to women, society and the ecological environment. Essential to men's spirituality is a strong longing for women and that unity between men and women is crucial for sustaining the country's culture, society and natural environment.

Men's spirituality is women bound (or women centred) manifesting "women's power relative to men" in Bangladesh culture (Quisumbing, 2003, p, 41). The paper builds on the overwhelming men's spiritual reality in respect of women in Bangladesh portraying that the male folks of the country have weakness to and for women with regards to social, economic, religious and spiritual objectives of life.

Bangladesh culture is enriched with feministic folk literature, both in oral and written form. Baul songs, a vibrant component of folk literature, reveal perspectives on male-female relationships that are constituted of the exoteric and esoteric aspects of Maya (attachment to world affairs). Maya plays the vital key role for holistic peace and happiness management amidst the country's natural and political adversities such as floods, cyclones and droughts; and rampant corruption amidst unsustainable development policy, political unrest and bad governance.

The syncretic Baul tradition that has been built on the synthesis of Hindu-Buddhist and Islamic Sufi traits plays active roles in the positive development of men's spirituality in relation to women. The Bauls promote Sufistic values such as "equality", "brotherhood" and "matriarchy or feminism"[15]. They stress that women are men's only refuge for gaining Sakti[16] for their physio-spiritual development as well as for socio-economic and environmental sustainability management. Evidence of women's respectable position in rural household management is traditionally inherent in village culture. Some features of their position are observable at the Akhras (centres) of Baul gurus as well as at Mazars (Sufi shrines), which are innumerable in Bangladesh (Saklain, 1987; Hossain, 1990, 1995). Bangladesh's political leadership by women is another example of women's respectability in Bangladesh culture.

Kari Wynn's observation (in *The News From Bangladesh*, June 29, 2007) reflects the above cultural paradigm: although Bangladesh is considered a moderate Muslim nation, the influence of Islamic teachers is significant, especially among the many non-literate people who live in villages outside the country's larger cities. God's love knows no boundaries in this country of 149 million people, 86 percent of whom follow Islam. Though many people in the villages cannot read, "(i)f you tell lessons in story form, you've got a group of listeners

[14] The Bauls, the feminist mendicants who roam from one shrine to another in Bangladesh villages and cities along with a female associate, are seen as being at the root of Bengali culture. While mostly unlettered, they show a full measure of poetic, musical, and philosophical talents. They come from both Muslim and Hindu backgrounds. The Baul tradition is unique in the world and famous for socio-religious syncretisation. They are simple, natural and unembellished. Their songs are of great relevance for a holistic view of life and hence have a crucial importance from a sustainability point of view.

[15] Feminism comes to bring both men and women to the fullness of life, the wholeness of soul, for which we were all made in the image and likeness of God (Chittister, 1998, p. 37).

[16] As *Sakti* is religiously believed to be a goddess – a female deity (Karim, 1995, p. 133), the folk philosophers of Bangladesh venerate woman as the symbol of *sakti* for men.

like you wouldn't believe" (*The News From Bangladesh*, June 29, 2007).

## Men's Maya for Women

Men's passion of Maya for women in Bangladesh culture is perceptible. Dasgupta (1976, p. 178) observes that as the tree is fixed to the earth by its roots and the black-bee is attached to the lotus, so a man is bound to the woman – and all in love. The Hindu Sahajya cult (a pre-Baul mystic tradition of Bengal) claims that all women are venerable and no harm should ever be done to them, nor should any female animal be sacrificed (Dimock, 1966, p. 99).

A popular Baul song that vibrates in rural Bangladesh day and night reveals insights of men's Maya for women, children and the world in which he lives[17]:

*"I have willingly bounded myself with the chain of Maya.*
*The chain of steel can be broken open, but not the chain of Maya.*
*I was born as a complete entity.*
*I have liberated my half entity in marrying,*
*a quarter to my offspring, and*
*a quarter for sustaining Samsara[18]. "*

Hence, a man acknowledges his completeness in sacrificing, in the process of sharing with, and transmitting his entity gradually to his spouse, offspring and sustainability activities through Samsara – all out of Maya. A married woman is called 'Ardhangini' (the better half), meaning that she is the half-manifest of her husbandman. A Bangladeshi husband with his post-marital half-entity still transforms himself to a quarter after becoming a father – a symbol of complete manhood. At this stage he exhausts his remaining quarter-self in engaging himself in providing his family with socio-economic and other survival needs. This suggests that a man is dedicated to his family where his wife is the focal point of Maya that leads a man to fully liberate himself.

## Women's Spirituality

In Bangladesh culture, women's most important aim in life is to become a mother. Motherhood is the starting point towards achieving completeness in the purpose of being on this earth. Women's spirituality for nurturing their offspring and all in the environment is profound in Bangladesh culture. Ruether (1996) argues that for rural Bangladeshi women spirituality is basically earth based. The relationship between women and earth is reciprocal. The women take care of the earth while the earth in return provides for their needs. This earth-based spirituality is manifested in the day-to-day life.

Hollows (2000) finds that the 'traditional' feminine traits such as domesticity and motherhood that can lead women to a position in which femininity is treated uncritically are still sought by Bangladeshi women. It appears that though women in 'masculine' roles are seen as a sign of 'progress', this can degrade women's position and spirituality (Hollows).

In order to achieve such spiritual fulfilment and worldly completeness, most folk and many urban women visit the institutions of Akhras, Mazars and spiritual gurus with the aspiration to get married to good men and be blessed with the birth to saints, among other things. According to the principles of these institutions, women are Maer Jati (the gender or race of mother) who are at the centre of procreation, humanity development and social sustainability. It is widely held in Bangladesh culture that heaven lies at the feet of the mother. Bauls stress that spirituality of women is 'regeneration bound'. Women's spirituality is considered the 'inner-force' while men's the "outer-force" for sustainability. They together constitute a fully integrated and cohesive social life (Chittister, 1998, for example, also maintains that both genders separately are only half of what they are).

The much-criticised Purdah (to keep out of view or commonly interpreted as wearing the veil) system of Islam[19] for both Muslims and Hindus of Bangladesh, is interpreted as an outcome of women's intrinsic spiritualty. In rural Bangladesh where 14% of people are comprised of non-Muslims (such as Tribal Animists, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians), purdah "displays richness of a family and elevates its prestige and status. As a result, the richer the family, the stricter is the purdah" (Women for Women Study and Research Group, 1979, p. 230).

Purdah also demonstrates the honoured position or higher rank of women in society. As women are precious to society for their procreative power and overall sustainability management, their chastity must be maintained. Many women pilgrims at Mazar assert that purdahless (immodest) women invite bad people to rob their jewellery, kidnap or assault them and distract men from respecting them as Maer Jati. These women firmly believe that women who observe modesty are self-guarded. It is also well versed in Bangladesh culture that

[17] Bara Sadh kore poresi bidhi mayar beri pai. Lohr beri vangle khule, mayar beri khula dai.
Nia elam sholo ana, bia kore anlam jare dilam aat ana.
Char ana nilo jadu moni, char anate samsar moy.

[18] The meaning of Samsara is materialism for a living.

[19] It is of interest to note here that Islam did not have much to do to introduce the Purdah system in Bangladesh. It already existed in the upper strata of Hindu society and there this was "related to the consideration of prestige and to the desire to maintain high rank, much like the Victorian cult of domesticity" (Duley & Edwards, 1986, p. 155).

marriageable girls who maintain modesty are in high demand for marriage without any dowry (Hossain, 1995).

In other words, women's spirituality is central to Adab (etiquette). An interpretation of this reveals that Bengali women's spirituality manifests the social integrity of Adab, which is defined by Al-Attas as "the discipline of body, mind and soul; the discipline that assures the recognition and acknowledgment of one's proper place in relation to one's physical, intellectual and spiritual capacities and potential; the recognition and acknowledgment of the reality that knowledge and being are ordered hierarchically according to their various levels and degrees" (Al-Attas, 1980).

Accordingly, women's spirituality is traditionally vested with the responsibilities of motherhood, household management and foundation education for children. Breast feeding and nurturing of their children are the well-known aspect of women's nature and spirituality that have been handed down from the beginning of creation. Napoleon is believed to have said: "Give me a good mother, I shall give you a good nation" (Values of the Wise, n.d.). Giving a good foundation education for children, equally for girls and boys, is the ultimate objective of motherhood spirituality. Related to this are the care and nurturing that women apply towards their home and natural environment.

## Women in Society

Both in Islamic and Indian[20] social value judgements, men and women are equal. An assignment of lower status to women in Indian culture is only the outcome of an inadequate understanding of this culture as a whole. Duley and Edwards (1986) note that in talking about the Indian subcontinent, there is the ever-present danger of oversimplification, for there are many Islamic and native syncretistic traditions within India, Bangladesh and Pakistan for example. There is a vast amount of literature on the status of women in the Islamic religion and on Islamic women's formal rights and relationships. Duley and Edwards in particular point out that historically Islam has adapted to and interacted with a wide variety of ecological, economic and cultural environments.

In the eyes of the Shariah (exoteric Islam) women are higher in status, as the Prophet Mohammad said that the position of a mother to her child is three times higher than that of a father.[21] In the esoteric sciences of the Indian saints, as blended and adopted by the institution of Mazar, it is emphasised that a woman is always the Guru of her husband and can also be a Guru to others, for "women are Gurus by their nature" (Dimock, 1966, p. 102).

Bauls, inspired by a similar philosophy, rarely travel without female associates. They express their sentiments in songs in relation to the recognition, acknowledgment and proper place of women in the society. The following is an example[22]:

*"Say to me, who can know*
*woman in this world?*
*She gives birth to the three worlds.*
*As a mother she brings up her child.*
*In ignorance, do not neglect her.*
*Think once, who helped you to be independent?"*

Bauls believe in the spirit of the song and demonstrate it in practice. In any case, the social position of women in Bengali society in general is judged by the sociological expositions of Mazars and Bauls although western social scientists often consider women to be highly discriminated against in Bangladesh according to their own cultural scale of measuring. Women's presence at Mazars also appears to be an example of their freedom to go out of their home boundary. This also defends the issue of the place of Bengali women in their society assigned by outsiders. To this end, Duley and Edwards (1986) suggest that anti-Islamic biases are pervasive in Western culture, and the assumption that Muslim women are particularly degraded is unfortunately virtually automatic in Europe and North America and does not necessarily corresponds to the way women are perceived from within their own society.

Karim (1995) notes that Western themes of feminism cannot envisage a situation where male and female relations are managed in a way as flexible and fluid as they are in South Asian countries such as Bangladesh. These relationships appear hierarchical on the formal level and as contrasting as the village is to the State; but in day-to-day activity, through the family and social life, men and women go about doing things which are important to them without asserting who are or which sets of activities are more valuable or indispensable. The

[20] For historical reasons the Bangladeshi culture is strongly influenced and in many ways derived from Indian culture.

[21] "A man came to the Prophet Mohammad and said: 'O Messenger of God, who among the people is most deserving of my good companionship?' He said, 'Your mother.' He asked, 'Then whom?' He said, 'Your mother.' He asked, 'Then whom?' He said, 'Your mother.' He asked, 'Then whom?' He said, 'Then your father."

[22]
Narike vober pore ke bolo chinte pare?
Vobe, garvadhari hoe nari trijagat prasab kore.
Matri rupa kore dharon
ei narite kore palon
vrame andha hoe o mon
tare tussa koro omon
vebe dekho dekhi, nari seki
kar bole berao ghure?

"state" is metaphorised in men and "village" in women, and the former seems more visible than the latter, and hence more powerful and dominant. However, a state without people responding and reacting to it does not exist.

In village Bangladesh, men work in the fields and women at home. Women's jobs include the proper use and maintenance of household assets, processing of agricultural harvests, cooking and processing of food, hospitality, child rearing, house-keeping and treasury or money management[23]. "Happiness in family life depends on women's quality" (Samsar Shukher hoy ramanir gune) – this secular saying is religiously believed in Bangladesh, perhaps, more widely than many other religious sayings. Women take decisions on most of the household matters. Above all, women's desire, demand and decision in regard to household improvement have priority over men's wishes in this context. This is an established fact in Bangladesh.

The following folk story describes how the husbands should be loyal to their wives. One day a meeting with the agenda "who is not afraid of his wife" was organised in the market place of a village. The organiser called to his side those who were afraid. All the men came to his side except one. Everyone curiously went to this man in the hope that they too might learn how each of them could likewise win over his wife. When asked, why he was different from the other men, the man replied that his wife asked him not to participate in the meeting. Such folk stories are commonly the product of culture.

## Conclusion

Men's spirituality recognises women as a source of Sakti for men in order for spiritual development, regeneration, resilience, complementariness, and hence, holistic sustainability management to be maintained. This is why marriage is regarded in Islam as "half of religion", implying that its purpose is primarily spiritual (or psychological) and social welfare and development, and not an economic one. Material and economic conditions ought to be arranged to suit the social purpose and the social conditions are to be arranged to serve the spiritual purpose, not the other way round as is often the case in the West.

It is often claimed that "the overall low value status of women in the society" does prevail in Bangladesh (Women for Women Study and Research Group, 1979, p. 380), and, as a result rural Bangladeshi females face severe discrimination in terms of household expenditure (Quisumbing, 2003). These claims are not only occasionally or fractionally true, but also the situation is aggravating and likely to worsen should the acculturation of Western model of cultural globalisation continue repositioning the country's traditional spiritualistic value system with that of aggressive materialism.

The promotion of globalisation that presently lacks sustainability education is responsible for this. A revival of values-based educational system, which is on decline in the formal educational sectors of Bangladesh, could restore the losses. One laments: In those beautiful days of the Vedic period of India, the glory of which still surrounds the country like a faint halo, women took part freely in the social and political life of the country (Duley & Edwards, 1986). However, mothers are still the primary gurus (educators) of their children's foundation education in rural Bangladesh where most people are not formally literate. Men's Maya based spirituality for women is likely to enjoy long term sustainability in Bangladeshi pluralistic culture.

## References


Al-Attas, A.-N. (1980). *The concept of Islamic education*. Kuala Lumpur: Art Printing Works.

Chittister, J. D. (1998). *Heart of flesh: A feminist spirituality for women and men*. London: William B. Eerdmans.

Dasgupta, S. (1976). *Obscure religious cults*. Calcutta, India: Firma KLM.

Dimock, E. Jr. (1966). *The place of the hidden moon*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Duley, M. I., & Edwards, M. I. (Eds.). (1986). *The cross-cultural study of women: A comprehensive guide*. New York: The Feminist Press.

Hollows, J. (2000). *Feminism, femininity and popular cultur*e. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Hossain, A. (1990). *Religion of songs: The religious beliefs and practices of the Bauls of Bangladesh*. Masters dissertation, Deakin University, Australia.

Hossain, A. (1995). *Mazar culture in Bangladesh*. Doctoral thesis, Murdoch University, Australia.

Karim, W. J. (Ed.). (1995). *'Male' and 'female' in developing South Asia*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Quisumbing, A. R. (Ed.). (2003). *Household decisions, gender and development: A synthesis of recent research*. Washington DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Ruether, R. (Ed.). (1996). *Women healing earth: Third world women on ecology, feminism and religion*. New York: Orbis Books.

Saklain, G. (1987). *Bangladesher Sufi Sadhaka* (The Sufi mystics of Bangladesh). Dhaka, Bangladesh: Islamic Foundation.


[23] About 95% of village people in Bangladesh do not have accounts with banks. Their cash savings are kept at home under the care of housewives.

Smith, R., & Standish, P. (Eds.). (1997). *Teaching right and wrong: Moral education in the balance*. London: Trentham Books.

Values of the Wise (n.d.). Available from http://www.valuesofthewise.com/public/servicepages/quotationsearchresults/index.cfm?requesttimeout=600, accessed 27 May 2007.

Women for Women Study and Research Group (Ed.). (1979). *Situation of women in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: UNICEF.

# Women at the Heart of Sustainability: Bangladesh Perspective

**Amzad Hossain (A.Hossain@murdoch.edu.au)**
**Popie Hossain Rhaman (litonr@dodo.com.au)**
**Rumana Islam (R.Islam@murdoch.edu.au)**
**Dora Marinova (D.Marinova@murdoch.edu.au)**
Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy
Murdoch University, Murdoch WA 6150 Australia

**Abstract**

The paper aims at depicting the reality of Bangladesh culture in terms of women's position in relation to sustainability. It argues that women are at the heart of achieving and maintaining sustainability. The home environment plays a formative role for the development of values and practices that can facilitate the establishment of a sustainability culture. Women's multiple roles, such as in spousing, mothering, child raring and foundation education of children on one hand, and harvest processing, food preparation, hospitality and housekeeping, on the other, are not only significant but also irreplaceable. Men's role is mostly associated with that of a provider, while women engage more actively with the holistic upbringing of the future generations. The unity of diversified pluralistic religious culture in Bangladesh is envisioned to dignify women. The paper argues that all religions (Animism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam) have created a unique syncretistic culture that recognises women in a way that is different from the western culture, but allows Bangladesh to retain its sustainability in the midst of difficult socio-political as well as natural phenomena.

## Introduction

"Samsar Shukher hoy ramanir gune" (Women's attributes generate family happiness). This overwhelmingly popular wisdom is religiously believed, promoted, facilitated and observed in the pluralistic culture of Bangladesh. Bangladesh culture depicts that the country's female population contributes to individual, social, economic and ecological sustainability management more than its male population does; for women have, as Shiva (1989) observes, holistic knowledge for conserving natural resources and using them sustainably for survival. Women of the Third World countries such as Bangladesh have conserved ecological thought and action which make survival, justice and peace possible (Shiva).

Bangladesh is a populous nation in the Indian subcontinent of South Asia. The river intensive and flood-prone deltaic soils of the country tend to induce its people – male and female – to live in harmony with nature as well as with each within the wider society. People are used to accommodate the prevalent syncretistic culture constituted of a mix of Animism, Hinduism, Buddhism and two streams of Islam – the Shariah (exoteric laws) and Sufism (inner aspects of the Shariah). All these cultural traits value women highly in many sustainability management aspects. Moreover, the synergies generating from the confluence of all these women respecting cultural traits inspire people of Bangladesh to lead a lifestyle which is in general feministic (service-centric) in sociality, naturalistic in consumption habits and mystical in spirituality.

The evolution of the unique mystical Baul tradition in Bangladesh tends to upkeep the status of women at the centre of society and the way it relates to the ecology. The Bauls are mostly unlettered mendicants who roam from one shrine to another in the country's villages and cities, showing a full measure of poetic, musical, and philosophical talents. They are usually accompanied with a female associate and in many ways their philosophy and multiple messages conveyed through their songs are feministic as they put a very high value on the role of women in society. Coming from Muslim and Hindu backgrounds, the Bauls are seen as being at the root of the one thousand year old Bengali culture of today. Their songs are of great relevance for sustainability as they encourage moderate consumption, respect for other human beings and the natural world. The Baul tradition is unique in the world and famous for socio-religious syncretisation. This has placed Bangladesh in a distinctive position in relation to sustainability.

A fairly smooth continuity in retaining the age-long tradition of seeing the country's women at the heart of recurrent sustainability management is one of the unique phenomena in Bangladesh, against a rapidly changing and globalising world. Women's role has been minimised, trivialised and made invisible in many parts of the world (Chittister, 1998) but in Bangladesh they are being held in high respect. One explanation of this the influence of the Baul philosophers who stress that it is largely the nature gifted feminine values and women's diverse contributions that make a population happy. Indeed the people of

Bangladesh have transformed as the happiest nation in the world.[24]

Women's presence is prominent not only within the home environment. For example, all the credit for the famous micro-credit initiative of Dr Yunus (a success story worldwide that has triggered him to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006) goes to the women folks who have taken the initiative and responsibility of developing successful business activities. Women's spontaneous participation in economic, social and ecological sustainability related activities facilitate Bangladesh to maintain a relatively sustainable way of living amidst many prevailing unsustainable factors such as population boom, poverty, political unrest, corruption, floods, droughts and cyclones.

Maloney (1991) observes that despite many recurrent natural and manmade challenges to rural and coastal livelihoods, Bangladesh enjoys the capacity to support a huge population (currently over 2,200 people per square mile), and its future for many centuries, appears uniquely bright. He adds that there is probably no other society in the world in which such a population can subsist on the land without destroying the resource base.

At the core of this are the country's women. It is their roles in sustainability management that largely help sustain Bangladesh and maintain a vibrant society and a life style in harmony with nature. The remainder of the paper first examines women's role in relation the upbringing of children as the basis for sustainability management, and then explores issues related to individual and social sustainability as well as economic and ecological sustainability.

## Upbringing of Children

Men's role in Bangladesh is mostly associated with that of a provider and is often described mainly in direct economic activities and terms, while women engage more actively with the holistic upbringing of newborns. In fact, mothers have full responsibility for the upbringing of the children in their first two years of life starting with breast feeding and continuing through home education. Breast-feeding is of critical importance to children's nutritional status because it both provides them with optimal nutrition and protects their health (Quisumbing, 2003). Although women in Bangladesh culture are generally content with a bit less than sufficient amount of food intake in terms of the Western context of a full meal, the breastfeeding women are of exception. Village women know that there is a connection between the mother's food and the child's wellbeing. Just after the child's birth the mother takes fried food to heal her body quickly and then she takes a special soup, watery curry and smashed black cumin to increase the flow of milk to feed her baby (Epstein & Watts, 1981).

Mothers bear full responsibility for the health and life of the child. Not even the very poorest mother would leave her child alone in a room even when the child is asleep. She gets either the elder brother or sister or a parent or neighbour to keep an eye on the child while she is away at work. If she cannot find anyone she takes the child with her and puts it on her lap or on the ground while she works. For the first few years of the child's life, it is the mother who is responsible for the baby's upbringings. This bonding with the mother is essential into building habits of work, living and enjoyment of family life and nature. The father's role is very limited. If he takes the child in his arms, it becomes a scene of pleasure and for neighbours' delight (Epstein, 1981).

Quisumbing (2003) observes that many children from poor families in Bangladesh do not attend school mainly because they contribute to their family's livelihood and cannot be spared. The non-school-going boys help their fathers at work. The non-school-going girls stay with their mothers to assist in the household work including looking after infants. The family environment however provides social values and habits that encourage a sustainable way of living. This includes respect for the wisdom and efforts of the parents or elderly as well as care for younger siblings and nature that supports the family life. In all cases elder brothers are taught to give their best possessions to their young sisters because they have to take care of them. The girls are taught and brought up by mothers with values such as to show patience, to sacrifice for others whether elder or younger (Epstein, 1981).

Jointly fathers and mothers informally transmit the fundamental social, economic and ecological values to their children in the context of contemporary living. The role of women however is much more pronounced as it is multifaceted and covers the reals of the home environment as well as the outside world. It is also more holistic in developing a balanced approach to eating, playing, working, health and education among others.

## Individual Sustainability

Individual sustainability in Bangladesh culture denotes people's craving for improving longevity as well as achieving immortality. Longevity or to live longer refers to one's existence in this world, whereas immortality refers to postmortal sustainability by way of remembrance by people.

Good deeds such as helping people in need, animal loving and hospitality are the ones that make people to be remembered. Bangladesh is commendable for its hospitality including sharing food with friends and

[24] According to http://www.bol-online.net/bnd/index.htm, Bangladeshis are world's happiest people - The Asian Age, December 29, 1998.

relatives, especially with strangers and beggars. Credit in this regard is due solely to women. In Bangladesh culture it is the women who decide what to cook and how much to cook. Women of non-poor households generally cook just enough for all members of the family, still bearing in mind that a guest (a beggar or a friend) will be present at the eating time. The women from poor households generally survive with a bit less than enough. They also welcome guests. However, under both circumstances overeating is unlikely to take place; and such non-overeating is encouraged by health management wisdom and religious beliefs. It is popularly believed that occasional fasting and even non-eating, while some extent of temptation for more food intake is still present, result in healthy life with increased longevity.

Women traditionally take their meals last after serving the male members and the children first. "A mother has hardly a square meal. She is the residual claimant of food and is responsible for feeding the husband and her numerous children even at the cost of her own starvation sometimes" (Women for Women Study and Research Group, 1979, p. 143). With the gradually improving standards of life in the country, starvation is a less common phenomenon and consequently women's life expectancies have consistently improved and they now live longer than men[25].

The importance of a balanced and healthy life style, including eating habits is something that is at the core of individual sustainability, and women in Bangladeshi households are predominantly responsible for this.

## Social Sustainability

Epstein (1981) observes that whether rich or poor, Bengali village women dream of getting married, then having children and subsequently sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. They consider it to be lucky and desirable if a woman is liable to live together with her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren. Social peace management wisdom suggests women should be calm, non-talkative and gentle. So from their early childhood girls are trained by their mothers as to how to be good wives and mothers. Many girls aged eight and nine know how to cook and look after babies. When the mothers go out to work they do the housework, cook, serve food to the father and look after the younger brothers and sisters. They collect the fuel wood. Daughters contribute a lot to the smooth running of the parental home (Epstein).

Chittister (1998) however observes that the traditional cultural institutions in Bangladesh are under stringent scrutiny and massive pressure to change. One factor has been the Green revolution introduced in Bangladesh since the 1970s. Nothing is stable: not marriage, not national boundaries, not economic well-being, not religion, not the globe; and not even men-women roles and relationships – the very foundation upon which human sustainability has rested for centuries is itself in question (Chittister. 1998).

Many women in Bangladesh are forming their own organisations in order to resist the incumbrances of the past, such as superstition, illiteracy, dowry and torture of housewives (The News Today, February 8, 2007) as well as the changes that push women into a less socially sustainable way of living. For example, the women of Bishnupur village of Khetupara Union Under Shathia Thana of Pabna district have formed Women Action Committee.

Venerating women, Baul Fakirs demonstrate the respectable position of women in society. Consequently, the social position of women in Bengali culture as a whole is judged by the religious and sociological expositions of Baul Fakirs. Women as head of the state in Bangladesh and the neighbouring countries sharing similar culture, show that women are highly regarded by the general mass, although Western social scientists often consider women to be highly discriminated against in Bangladesh.[26] In village Bangladesh, men work in the fields and women at home. Women's jobs include the proper use and maintenance of household assets, processing of agricultural harvests, cooking and processing of food, hospitality, child rearing, housekeeping and treasury or money management[27]. Brides are interviewed before marriage by the senior relatives of bridegrooms who especially examine the decision-making aptitude of brides. Women take decisions on most of the household matters. Above all, women's desire, demand and decision in regard to household improvement have priority over male wishes in this context.

In many ways women carry a much higher responsibility for the sustainable future of the

[25] Data available from http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/ipc/idbsprd.

[26] The cultural scale of measuring poverty and women's position in Bangladesh by Westerners is like valuing the Westerner's habit of drinking wine by the cultural scale of the folk Muslims of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, the low-caste Hindus like Methars (cleaners/sweepers) and Muchis (cobblers) who drink homemade wine are seen lowly by both folk Muslims and Hindus, and their attitude in this context is applied to the Westerners.

[27] About 95% of village people in Bangladesh do not have accounts with banks. Their cash savings are kept at home under the care of the wives.

Bangladeshi society and have the means to actually influence such a future.

## Economic Sustainability

It is clearly observable that women's roles and opportunities are crucial to the solution and management of Indian subcontinent's economic problems (Duley, 1986). Bangladesh's natural features and religio-spirituality have synergistically made it a culture that men till, sow, grow and harvest crops; while women do the post harvest management. Without this role of women it is impossible to maintain intra-family harmony and peace. This is why the secular saying: "Happiness in family life depends on women's values" is universal in Bangladesh.

It is argued that as Bangladesh economy is subsistence oriented and labour mainly self-employed, a strict dichotomy between economic/ income generating and non-economic/non-income generating activities based on wage payment cannot be maintained. The tasks that rural women perform are critical to the processing of food grains, preservation and storage of seeds, homestead gardening, rearing poultry and livestock and cooking family food – all these are an integral part of economic sustainability of the country (Women for Women Study and Research Group, 1979). Village housewives are experienced in raising and rearing livestock (poultry, goats and cattle). They know how to make 'muri' (rice bubble). Both livestock and rice bubble can be sold in the market profitably and NGOs prefer to lend money to women for these purposes. According to Quisumbing (2003), a study of women's participation in micro-credit schemes fostering women empowerment in Bangladesh shows that they perform well. As a result overall reduction of the incidence of violence against women has also been noticed.

Young, Samarasighe, and Kusterer (1993) observe that the above roles of women are crucial because development interventions need to be sensitive not only to family forms and social norms but also to the ways in which the family is adapting to the unprecedented challenges of modernisation, including changes in agricultural production, urbanisation, male out-migration and environmental degradation. Amidst all these, women internalise family welfare rather than personal welfare as their measure of utility in a way that men cannot (Young et al.). Rural women spend about 12-14 hours daily in productive work. This is as compared to 10-11 productive hours daily by men in a rural society (Women for Women Study and Research Group, 1979).

Conventional views of housework ignore the multiplicity of tasks that women perform simultaneously. This is in contra-distinction to male labour where only a single task is performed, only one at a time. It is seldom realised that the labour of women involves many simultaneous operations such as drying grains, watching children, peeling and cutting vegetables and supervising the work of older children. During slack seasons or monsoons, women engage themselves in making fishing nets and traps, cane mats, baskets, quilts and many other types of jute and bamboo handicrafts (Women for Women Study and Research Group, 1979).

The importance of women for achieving and maintaining economic sustainability is hence in many ways more significant and more holistic than the economic work and economic functions performed by men in the Bangladeshi society.

## Ecological Sustainability

Women's roles in ecological sustainability of village homesteads surpasses that of men too. Shiva (1989) argues that women were the world's original food producers, and continue to be central to food production systems in the Third World in terms of the work they do in the food chain. Shiva (1994) also stresses that women from Third World societies are often able to offer ecological insights that are deeper and richer than the technocratic recipes of international experts or the responses of men in their own societies. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, these responses come from cultures in which maintenance of life has been the civilising force; secondly, the gender division of labour, introduced or aggravated by the development processes, has increasingly pushed women to work for the production of sustenance, while men have been drawn into military and profit-seeking activities.

Ruether (1996) argues for women's roles in managing ecological sustainability from a spiritual perspective. Women spirituality is basically earth based. The relationship between women and earth is a reciprocal one. The women take care of the earth while the earth in return provides for the needs of the women. What Shiva (1989) observes in this regard is that productivity is a measure of producing life and sustenance and although this kind of productivity has been rendered invisible, it does not reduce its centrality to survival. In Indian cosmology (that Baul philosophers share) person and nature (purusha-Prakriti) are a duality in unity. They are inseparable complements of one another in nature. Women's knowledge is ecological and plural, reflecting both the diversity of natural ecosystems and the diversity in cultures that nature based ecological living gives rise to (Shiva).

Gnanadason, (2005) observes that women have played a central role in the traditions of prudence in India and

elsewhere in the world: Latin America, Philippines, Guatemala, Kenya, Southern Africa – all offer experiences of women healing earth. Exploring the resistance movements of Indigenous women in the Utharkhand region off the Himalayas, Shiva (1989) concludes that the intellectual heritage of ecological survival lies with those who are experts in survival. They have the knowledge and experience to extricate us from the ecological cul-de-sac that the Western masculinist mind has maneuvered us into.

While Third World women have privileged access to survival expertise, the knowledge is inclusive, not exclusive. The ecological categories with which they think and act can became the categories of liberation for all, men and women, for the West as well as for the non-West, for the human as well as for the non-human elements of the earth (Shiva, 1989).

## Conclusion

There are some untrue propaganda made by the outsiders especially in regard with women's socio-economic and ecological management roles and their position in Bangladesh. What we argue is that Bangladesh is not easily comparable with Western themes of feminism that cannot envisage a situation where male and female relations are managed in a flexible and fluid way. These relationships appear hierarchical on the formal level and as contrasting as the village (methaphorised as women) is to the city (metaphorised as men), and the former seems more visible than the latter, and hence more powerful and dominant. However, a city without its hinterland (villages) cannot exist (Karim, 1995).

In day-to-day activity through the family and social life in Bangladesh, men and women go about doing things which are important to them without asserting who are or which sets of activities are more valuable or indispensable. The outsiders who lack an understanding of Bangladesh culture can see things upside down. However a thorough analysis from a holistically point of view highlights that women are at the heart of sustainability at an individual, social, religious, economic and ecological level.

## References


Chittister, J. D. (1998). *Heart of flesh: A feminist spirituality for women and men*. London: William B. Eerdmans.

Duley, M. I., & Edwards, M. I. (Eds.). (1986). *The cross-cultural study of women: A comprehensive guide*. New York: The Feminist Press.

Epstein, T. S., & Watts, R. A. (Eds.). (1981). *The endless day: Some case material on Asian rural women.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Gnanadason, A. (2005). *Listen to the women! Listen to the Earth!* Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications.

Karim, W. J. (Ed.) (1995). *'Male' and 'female' in developing South Asia*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Maloney, C. (1991). *Behaviour and poverty in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: University Press.

Quisumbing, A. R. (Ed.). (2003). *Household decisions, gender and development – a synthesis of recent research*. Washington DC: International Food Policy Research Institute.

Ruether, R. (Ed.). (1996). *Women healing earth: Third world women on ecology, feminism and religion*. New York: Orbis Books.

Shiva, V. (1989). *Staying alive: Women, ecology and development*. New Delhi, India: Zed Books.

Shiva, V. (Ed.). (1994). *Close to home: Women reconnect ecology, health and development*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers.

Women for Women Study and Research Group (Ed.). (1979). *Situation of women in Bangladesh*. Dhaka: UNICEF.

Young, G., Samarasighe, V., & Kusterer. K. (Eds.). (1993). *Women at the centre: Development issues and practices for the 1990s*. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press.

# Pride and Prejudice – The Lesbian 'Other Mother' and the Family Court of Australia

**Susan J. Kentlyn (s.kentlyn@uq.edu.au)**
School of Social Science
The University of Queensland, St Lucia QLD 4067 Australia

**Abstract**

The increasing use of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), especially by lesbians, has resulted in new forms of family and parenting. A comparison of two Family Court decisions, 'Re Patrick' (2002) and 'Verner & Vine' (2007), gives insight into how the Australian legal system is struggling to accommodate these new forms. A feminist, sociological reading of these judgments as texts analyses the power of words, especially as used by the judiciary, to construct and interpret social reality. The very different ways the Court dealt with how the birth mother in each case 'changed her mind' about the parenting of her child reveals how ideological constructions of the best interests of children and the proper forms of family relationships can be more influential than the law itself in judicial decisions.

## Introduction

A comparison of two cases heard by the Family Court of Australia, 'Re Patrick' (Family Court of Australia, 2002) and 'Verner & Vine'(Family Court of Australia, 2007), provides some insights into how the Australian legal system is struggling to accommodate new forms of parenting arising from the use of Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART). This is not a legal analysis of the merits of these cases, but a discourse analysis, a critical feminist, sociological reading of the decisions *as texts* in order to explore the role of the lesbian non-gestational mother, and particularly how 'fathers' may be seen to undermine that role in legal and social discourse.

'Re Patrick' concerns a child born as the result of artificial insemination of one of two lesbian partners by a known homosexual sperm donor. The terms of their original agreement about the man's role in the child's life were bitterly contested and the women decided not to involve him further and went into hiding. After he hired a private investigator to find them, legal proceedings ensued which resulted in the awarding of joint responsibility for decisions about the day-to-day care of the child to the two women, and ongoing contact to the man. The women applied for contact to cease; the man opposed their application and sought fortnightly contact, to increase over time. Justice Guest found the women to be the 'acknowledged residence parents' of the child, and that a sperm donor is not a 'parent' within the meaning of the Family Law Act 1995. Nevertheless, he also found it to be in the child's best interests to have ongoing contact with the man, and made detailed orders for that contact to take place. This judgment was made on April 5th 2002; on August 1st 2002 the birth mother killed herself and her son, who was then almost three. The coronial inquest found that the man's efforts to have regular contact with the child triggered an emotional crisis in the birth mother, and that on the day of the deaths she had been told by the Office of Births, Deaths and Marriages that he wanted to be added to the child's birth certificate (Butcher, 2004).

'Verner & Vine' concerns an appeal by a woman for contact with a four year old, severely handicapped child, 'A', born to the respondent mother as a result of IVF procedures at a time when the two women had been living together for seven years. The appellant claimed it was a lesbian relationship, the birth mother that they had only been friends, although she conceded that for the purposes of the IVF procedures she had held out that she was in a lesbian relationship with the appellant. After the two women ceased living together, the birth mother began cohabiting with, and subsequently married, a man with whom she had two more children. The trial judge dismissed the appellant's application for contact with the child, and the appeal was also dismissed.

This paper refers to the texts of the judgments provided by the Family Court of Australia website (see references), and uses the numbering of articles employed in those judgments. My examination of these cases will focus on the use of language in the judgments to describe and delineate the nature of the relationships between the adults and the children, and the impact this had on the subsequent decisions. I will also demonstrate how these cases hinge on two women who changed their minds – but that judicial heterosexism resulted in very different outcomes for these women, their partners, and their children.

## What's In a Name?

Mother. Father. Stepmother. Stepfather. For centuries, these terms have been adequate to describe the progenitors and caregivers of children. A mother was the woman who gave birth to the child. A father was the man whose fertilisation of an ovum resulted in the child. A stepmother was the father's subsequent wife, a stepfather was the mother's subsequent husband. Everything was clearly delineated so that the 'real'

parents – that is, the ones who supplied the genetic material, the biological parents – were easily distinguished from other caregivers.

Through modern reproductive technologies, the function of biological motherhood can now be split between the *genetic* mother (who provides the ovum) and the *gestational* or *birth* mother (who carries the pregnancy and gives birth), and neither might be the *social* mother who raises the child. A sperm donor may be known or unknown, and the sperm provided under conditions of complete or partial anonymity, through a fertility clinic, or by informal donations from friends or comparative strangers. The social parents may come from a spectrum of relationships, ranging from a conventional heterosexual married couple to co-parenting arrangements between various women and men.

New variations of the gendered relations within families are now routinely resulting from the rise of gay and lesbian parenting. Australian census figures suggest that about 20% of lesbian couples and 5% of gay male couples are raising children in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005). The Family Law cases I deal with here both ostensibly concern children born to lesbian couples using donor sperm. Different legal jurisdictions approach the problem of distinguishing a sperm donor from a 'parent' in different ways. In some, procreation 'the old-fashioned way' makes a man a father but sperm donation does not. In others, informal donation to an acquaintance may confer father status but formal donation through an infertility clinic does not. In the UK, if a clinic uses fresh sperm, the donor is considered to be the child's legal father, but not if the sperm is frozen (Jeffries, 2006).

Spender (1980) points out that language is a means of classifying and ordering the world, of constructing and manipulating reality. She outlines how dominant ideologies, such as patriarchy, are so embedded in language that they become taken-for-granted, making it difficult to analyse or challenge them. My analysis of the language in Family Court decisions will show how dominant ideologies of heteronormative family are perpetuated by the use of language, and in particular how the concepts of 'fatherhood' and 'family' are used to marginalise and exclude non-gestational lesbian mothers.

The names of all the actors in 'Re Patrick' were revealed at the Coroner's Inquest in 2004 (Butcher, 2004), but I will use pseudonyms here for the birth mother (Diane), her partner (Jane), and the sperm donor (Neil).

The opening summary of the issues, reflecting how Justice Guest writes throughout the judgment, states: "child born as a result of artificial insemination of one of two lesbian partners by *homosexual sperm donor* – contested agreement – *father* seeking increased contact with child – *mother* and *co-parent* opposing order …whether it is in the best interests of the child to have increased contact with *his father*. . . ".

Here in this opening paragraph we can observe the politics of language at work. While acknowledging the agreement between the lesbian partners and a sperm donor, it refers to this man as the 'father'. It is exactly this distinction which was at issue in the case. The lesbian couple were contending that they viewed Neil as a donor of genetic material and had no intention or desire for him to play the role of 'father' in Patrick's life. By choosing to refer to him as the 'father', the judge was at best careless with his terminology, at worst pre-determining the outcome of the case based on his own philosophy of family and the best interests of children. He criticises Diane and Jane in the following terms:

*[Resolution through mediation]...has been simply unworkable in practice given the hardened position of the mother and both the philosophical and ideological bases upon which each of the mother and co-parent predicated their case…(88).*

Although he acknowledges the "diversity of gay and lesbian families and the varying roles donors play in the lives of children conceived using their donated sperm" (9), Guest fails to show an understanding that such diversity is of necessity a challenge to the existing philosophy and ideology of family. He upholds the existing regime at every opportunity, with no acknowledgement of his *own* philosophical and ideological position. This is most tellingly illustrated by several semantic errors he makes later in his judgment.

*At the first session of mediation ...the father was handed a proposed agreement ...which, on the husband's version of events, did not reflect the discussions that had earlier taken place between them ...It purported, on the husband's evidence, to include provisions outside what he alleged to be the agreement reached ...(151, emphasis added; see also 187, 224).*

Guest would probably regard referring to the homosexual sperm donor as the 'husband' instead of the 'father' as a mere 'slip of the pen', perhaps arising from the fact that the vast majority of the decisions he writes concerning contact do involve parents who are, or have been, husbands and wives. Nevertheless, his consistent use of the term 'father' rather than 'donor' indicates his inability or unwillingness to embrace a different paradigm of parenting and family involving two mothers and a non-parental donor, and thus to acknowledge the unique position and, indeed, vulnerability of the lesbian co-parent.

This brings us to the crux of the matter. Diane and Jane's objection to Neil was not so much either personal (although it certainly became so), or even philosophical or ideological, in the sense of being anti-men or anti-fathers per se. The women felt that Neil's

desire to assume the role of parent undermined the integrity of their family unit and threatened Jane's role as a parent (29). The important point here is that, by referring to Diane as the 'mother' and to Neil as the 'father', Guest himself relegates Jane to the margins and proves the women's fears were not unfounded.

A very different situation confronted both the initial trial judge and the appeal judges in 'Verner & Vine', but once again their judgments demonstrate how social reality is constructed by means of language. Verner was appealing for contact with a child born to Vine while they were living together in what Verner contended was a lesbian relationship. Vine claimed that they had 'only been friends (1, 11-7). The two women were 24 when the child was born, had lived together at that point for seven years, and had owned a home together, which was sold after their cohabitation ceased, almost two years after the child was born (2, 54)

The trial judge always refers to Vine as 'the mother' or the 'respondent mother' and despite the fact she signed official documents to say she was in a lesbian relationship with Verner, Justice Lawrie refers to the women only as 'former friends' (e.g. 17-34). Although initially referred to as the 'mother's husband', Lawrie calls this man the stepfather throughout the remainder of her decision. Notably, his children with Vine are usually referred to as the child's 'siblings' – not half-siblings or step-siblings (e.g., 19-45c). The result is that Vine and her family are all referred to in familial terms: 'mother', 'husband', 'stepfather', 'siblings'. Despite her clear and legally proven role in the child's conception and birth, Verner is always defined in the coldly legal terms of 'appellant' or 'applicant'. In this way, Lawrie further undermines Verner's entitlement to any kind of parental role, or her value to the child.

*During the course of the litigation the applicant repeatedly referred to the child as "my daughter" or "our daughter". The pattern of orders sought is a pattern which might be appropriate in the case of a parent, but would be extraordinary for a non-parent ...On the face of it, the applicant is less child focussed than concerned with an assertion ...of a parental "entitlement" (29-16, emphasis added)...The [appellant] not only sought through the proceedings to have the respondent "admit" to her lesbian past, but there is a real possibility that she wishes to tell the child about it as well ...The truth, she asserts, is that the mother was in a lesbian relationship in which she was the co-parent (60-32)... It would not be in the child's interests to be told that she is different from the other children in the family, or to be treated differently from the other children (18-40).*

Verner's only hope of winning contact is to establish that she is, in fact, a parent, and she can only do this by establishing she was in a lesbian relationship with Vine when the child was conceived and born. However, Lawrie construes these efforts as evidence that Verner is not really interested in the welfare of the child. Furthermore, the judge suggests that informing the child of the circumstances of her conception and birth are not in the child's interests, a finding which flies in the face of years of legal reform in adoption and donor-assisted fertilisation which has recognised that this is very much in the child's best interests (. , Avery, 1998; Trenka, Oparah, & Shin, 2006; UNROC, 1990).

Having found that Verner was not a "parent" under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 or the New South Wales Status of Children Act 1996, Justice Lawrie had to decide whether she might be within the class of "other people significant to [the child's] care, welfare and development" (12). Although Verner and Vine continued to live together in a home they jointly owned for nearly two years after the child's birth, Lawrie describes Verner's role in the child's life as "the occasional assistance she offered as *the mother's friend* when the child was younger" (18-41, emphasis added). She leaves the issue of the exact nature of the two women's relationship unresolved by saying "whatever the nature of the relationship at the time 'A' was conceived, it is now very different from a close friendship or a love affair" (17). Nevertheless, by referring to Verner as the mother's 'friend', the judge is stripping her relationship with both mother and child of its relational and affective content. There are many divorcing heterosexual couples who no longer enjoy a close friendship or love affair, yet this is not seen as grounds to exclude either parent from contact with their child/ren. If Vine's partner at the time of her child's conception through anonymous sperm donation had been an infertile man, it is hard to imagine that the judge would have found it in the child's best interests to have no further contact with him at all. Verner's primary difficulty, then, was to establish the nature of her relationship with Vine at the time of the child's conception and birth. This hinges on the fact that, even though Vine had claimed to be in a lesbian relationship with Verner at the time of the child's conception, her subsequent account of their relationship was very different.

## A Woman's Prerogative

Fundamental to the legal regulation of family formation by any means other than sexual intercourse within a heterosexual couple relationship, and the ensuing rights and responsibilities of parents, is the concept of Intentionality. For example, when an infertile man and his female partner have a child by means of donor insemination, or adopt a child, this man is automatically recognised in law as a parent to the exclusion of the man who provided the genetic material, because of his

intention to parent this particular child and the birth parents' or sperm donor's intention not to do so.

In the two cases discussed, I argue that both birth mothers revised their intentions – they changed their minds – subsequent to their original decisions about the conception, birth and parenting of their children. How the Court dealt with these changes resulted in very different outcomes for these mothers, their children, and their families.

The evidence given by both Diane and Jane in 'Re Patrick' clearly demonstrates that their original intentions were that Neil would have some kind of parenting role in Patrick's life, though perhaps not to the same extent as Neil believed (118). Diane advertised in a gay and lesbian newspaper for a 'sperm donor / co-parent', adding that the level of involvement was negotiable (2-8). Comments both women made in public settings early in the pregnancy suggest they were comfortable with him being some kind of 'dad' to their child (58, 126). However, as the pregnancy progressed they decided that they didn't want any involvement from him at all, to the point where they moved without telling him and asked all their friends not to reveal their location to him. After Neil used a private investigator to find them, he filed an application in the Family Court for *joint* responsibility with Diane only (no mention was made of Jane) for all decisions concerning Patrick's long term care, welfare and development (20). The mothers responded with an application that they have full joint responsibility for Patrick, and that Neil be granted supervised contact with him only twice a year (21).

Unfortunately, Diane insisted during the trial that she had *always* viewed Neil "merely as a 'donor' of genetic material (67, inverted commas in original) and would never have proceeded with the pregnancy had she known he wanted some kind of paternal role (67-70). The inconsistencies in her accounts, coupled with her hostility toward Neil and the fact that she continually called his character and motives into question (e.g. 48, 124) greatly reduced her credibility in Justice Guest's eyes. Eventually, whenever their testimonies were not in accord (which was most of the time), the judge came to prefer Neil's evidence over Diane and Jane's (66, 114, 136).

However, it is open to question as to why establishing Intentionality was so critical to the judge's decision concerning Neil's contact with Patrick. Guest admits that the Act requires him to regard the best interests of the child as the paramount consideration (38) and quotes s.60B of the Act which outlines the principles by which this should be determined (39). None of these refer to the intentions of parents when planning a child's conception and birth. Having found that *a sperm donor is not a 'parent' under the Act* (6, emphasis added), the only grounds for granting contact to Neil are as a person *other than a parent* "significant to [a child's] care, welfare and development" (39). Clearly what was crucial to this decision was Guest's personal belief, not required in law, that it is in a child's best interests for their biological father to be involved in parenting that child. This is illustrated by his decision to refer to the donor as the *father* "(which is not a statement of law)" (2). When Diane stated there was no need for a "parental" father in Patrick's life, she was asked why Patrick should be *different from any other child and not have a right to know his father* (77). Guest later remarked, "From what I have both heard and read, it is doubtless true that children can be happily raised within a homo-nuclear family, but the difference here is that the father desires and has always desired to play an active and fatherly role in the life of his son" (78).

He rejects the view of both mothers that Neil's contact with Patrick was causing them distress, anxiety, "enormous pain and suffering", and was undermining the integrity of their family unit (92, 152), a view supported by one of their mental health practitioners (170, 179). Guest also rejected the recommendations by the Child Psychiatrist engaged by the Court that contact visits should be limited because it is in the best interests of a child who has an intact nuclear family to differentiate between the role of a father in the traditional sense and the role of a 'known donor'(207). The judge's objections again were based on the mothers' original intentions. Even though he had already found that a sperm donor is *not* a 'parent' under the Act (6), he says:

> *In my view there is an obligation on 'parents' generally to encourage their children to have contact with the absent 'parent' (266, 267 inverted commas in original).*

While this is doubtless true for separating families, whether heterosexual or homosexual, a sperm donor is not an 'absent parent' in the eyes of the law. Guest's decision is not a legal one, it is an ideological one. It is grounded in his beliefs about, and experiences with, heterosexual nuclear families.

If this principle could be applied to a queer family, it would surely be in 'Verner & Vine'. Unlike Neil, Verner and Vine had apparently been in a de facto relationship when their child was conceived and born. Guest described the co-mother in 'Re Patrick' as "the acknowledged residence parent" (91). Verner could then be viewed as the absent 'parent' whose contact with their child should be encouraged. In a complete reversal of the principles applied in 'Re Patrick', however, Vine's apparent change of heart was not interrogated by the Court. Justice Lawrie viewed Verner's role in A's conception and birth as "a matter of history" (18-41) with no bearing on the child's

present and future care, welfare and development (29:17).

Justice Guest opined that Diane and Jane's evident distress over Neil's contact visits with Patrick would doubtless decrease over time and that they should accommodate themselves to these visits. "The Applicants should subjugate their own feelings …Each of them should inculcate in Patrick a proper attitude of respect for his father, notwithstanding their beliefs" (267). By contrast, Justice Lawrie found that granting contact to Verner would impinge on the needs of Vine and her family for "peace and tranquillity" (17-34) which would not be in the child's interests. Justice Guest agreed it would be better for Patrick to have "...three loving parents in his life than just two" (279); Justice Lawrie saw any contribution from a third parent as potentially confusing and distressing for the child.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that a lesbian who changes her mind about the involvement of a sperm donor in the ongoing parenting of her child is required by the Australian judiciary to account for this decision, and in fact to abide by her original intentions, no matter what the cost to her emotional and mental health, her relationship with her partner, and the tranquillity of their home. A woman who, on the face of the evidence, enters into a co-parenting relationship with a lesbian partner but who later changes her mind and marries a man is *not* required by the Australian judiciary to account for this decision, and is actively protected by the Courts.

## Conclusion

In this close reading of the two Family Court decisions 'Re Patrick' and 'Verner & Vine', I have examined how the Australian legal system is endeavouring to grapple with the lived experience of non-traditional families formed by new ARTs, and the complex associated issues. In the contested meanings of words like 'father', 'mother, 'parent' and 'co-parent', I have demonstrated the power of naming by the judiciary in constructing and interpreting social reality. The attitudes the Court displays to women changing their minds about partnering and parenting relationships reveal how ideological considerations about the best interests of children and the proper forms of family relationships can be more important than points of law for decisions about contact and the ongoing role of significant adults in the lives of children. It seems that where women are concerned, and lesbian women in particular, prejudice against 'fatherless' families and in favour of the normative hetero-nuclear family prevails. The pride of being a parent, even if by means of ARTs, is not guaranteed to a non-gestational lesbian mother; she remains at the periphery, her role nebulous and not clearly defined. All of the above highlight the critical need for law reform at both state and federal levels, to protect the interests of parents and children alike.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Stephen Page for advice on the legal issues involved – any errors in law are entirely mine and not attributable to him in any way. Thanks also to Indigo Willing for advice on issues of concealing the origins of children who are adopted or born as a result of ART.

## References

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2005). Same-sex couple families, *Year Book Australia*.

Avery, R. J. (1998). Information disclosure and openness in adoption: State policy and empirical evidence. *Children and Youth Services Review, 20*(1-2), 57-85.

Butcher, S. (2004) 'Coroner's finding on lesbian who killed self, son in access row'. The Age. 22 May 2004. http://global.factiva.com.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/ha/default.aspx

Family Court of Australia. (2002). FamCA 193. "Re Patrick". (An Application Concerning Contact) [2002] FamCA 193 (5 April 2002). http://www.austlii.edu.au//cgi-bin/disp.pl/au/cases/cth/family_ct/2002/193.html?query=Re.%20Patrick.

Family Court of Australia. (2007). "Verner & Vine" [2007] FamCA 354 (22 March 2007). http://www.austlii.edu.au//cgi-bin/disp.pl/au/cases/cth/family_ct/2007/354.html?query=Verner%20and%20Vine

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). (2007). *Same-sex: Same entitlements. National inquiry into discrimination against people in same-sex relationships: Financial and work-related entitlements and benefits.* Sydney, NSW: HREOC.

Jeffries, S. (2006) 'Who's the daddy?' *The Guardian.* 18 November 2006. http://global.factiva.com.ezproxy.library.uq.edu.au/ha/default.aspx Accessed 21 July 2007.

Spender, D. (1980) *Man made language*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Trenka, J. J., Oparah, C., & Shin, S. Y. (2006). *Outsiders within: Racial crossings and adoption politics.* Cambridge MA: South End Press.

UNROC. (1990). *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989. It entered into forced 2 September 1990, in accordance with Article 49*. United Nations Rights of Child (UNROC). http://www.nyas.net/unroc.html Accessed 7 August 2007

# Nurturing Gen Y Women

**Barbara J. Lawrence (lawrencb@usq.edu.au)**
Group Manager, Student Affairs and Academic Registrar
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

This paper explores the concepts of how we can nurture Gen Y women in the workplace and make their world a better place. To gain an insight into possible approaches to nurturing Gen Y women, a short scan of material currently available through national newspapers, online newsgroups and online information resources was undertaken. The aim was to see how Gen Y (gender inclusive) is being portrayed and how business is viewing the engagement of Gen Y as employees.

## Who are Gen Y?

Gen Y women are optimistic and in a world full of conflict and insecurities they view the concept of 'freedom' in a way Baby Boomers only fantasised about when colour TV entered their lounges. They are organised in a way that a Gen X woman wishes her mobile phone message bank could be. Gen Y women are challenging to mentor, lead and supervise in the workforce; they have little brand loyalty, although, in a contradiction of values, they value relationships and personal growth. If the Baby Boomers and Gen X women want to nurture the Gen Y women in their employment and careers, and to be world leaders and change agents; then they have to be part of providing an environment enhancing the Gen Y women's career outcomes by building supportive communities and engendering social responsibility.

Gen Y was born after 1980. A Gen Y person will, in 2007, be 27 years and younger. They are sometimes called KIPPERS (Kids In Parents Pockets Eroding Retirement Savings!). There are 4.2million Gen Y's in Australia in 2006. This generation comprises more than 1 in 5 Australians (McCrindle Research, 2006). They are the most formally educated generation Australia has produced with the highest high school retention rates and almost half of Year 12 students go to University and a further quarter study at TAFE (McCrindle Research, 2006).

Stephen Matchett (2007) may have summed it up when he wrote that members of Gen Y,

*...have grown up thinking recession is the collective noun for mid-morning break at school and depression is what happens when your avatar internet persona has a bad day. And because economics is not big on YouTube, many young workers are somewhat hazy on the relationship between productivity and pay…*

Gen Y is known as 'the immediate generation' (Adonis, 2007). James Adonis (2007), a business consultant who conducted a survey of more than 240 Australian business managers in regard to attitudes towards Gen Y employees, explains why they are considered "the immediate generation".

*So things like Google, where they can get information whenever they want, and eBay where they can buy whatever they want whenever they want, and MySpace, has enabled them, has conditioned them to want things immediately.*

Gen Ys are also big users of credit, being responsible for nearly a third of all credit card applications in 2006, which is not surprising if they are driven by immediacy (ABC News, Mar 14 2007). Unfortunately they are also responsible for about one third of all defaults listed by the leading credit reference agency, Veda Advantage (ABC News, Mar 14 2007).

### Perceptions of Gen Y

Lifestyle and employment traits attributed to Gen Y in the media have included:

- *...do not expect to have jobs for life and are driven by a different set of priorities* (Finch, n. d.*)*
- *...are less likely to stick with an unsatisfactory work situation and would rather be self employed than work for a bad manager…*(Finch)
- *...are firstly loyal to their career path and secondly to a great manager or team...*(Finch)
- *...craves 'inspirational' leadership... wants leaders who listen and involve them…*(Finch)
- *They figure 'somebody's going to screw me, well I had better screw them first'* (Korn, 2007).
- *...fail to understand what constitutes appropriate behaviour, have poor spelling and grammar skills, and lack good professional skills…*(Casben, 2007)
- *...more demanding than other workers…. and more likely to ask for a pay rise...*(Casben, 2007)
- *...they want to clime to the dizzy heights of 'careerdom' and they want it now…*(Patterson, 2007)

Indeed, research undertaken by *SmartCompany*, Roy Morgan Research and Dun and Bradstreet found about 70 % of employers have a generally negative view of the Generation Y workforce (Casben, 2007). Further, 90 % of the 315 small to medium businesses involved in the survey believe Gen Ys are more demanding in the workplace than other workers. The research showed that some employers feel that they are babysitting Gen Y and they are only employing because of the skills shortage. Amanda Gome from SmartCompany, said that some of the employers called them "Gen Y brats".

*'…they don't do the dishes in the workplace and they are being pampered' (Casben, 2007).*

Interestingly though, the survey also found that 94% of employers appreciate the technology skills Gen Y employees hold (Casben, 2007).

## Recruiting Gen Y

Hays Legal surveyed over 1,200 people revealing that Gen Y believes they must make the most of opportunities available to them in an environment of skills shortages in the workforce (Gibbs, 2005).

Some organisations, like St George Bank, have recently announced employee benefits tailored to Gen Y, based around, career breaks, flexible hours and part-time work (Financial Services Institute of Australia, 2007). Staff can take time off to pursue their contribution to the community, buy extra holidays, package childcare and receive goods and services at reduced rates.

To recruit Gen Y it is important for organisations to brand (Gibbs, 2005). Organisations need to declare what they can offer including honesty and respect, along with support for ongoing learning and development.

Peter Sheahan, a recognised expert on Gen Y, says employers have to find new ways to keep Gen Y workers loyal and happy, and training and development is what Gen Y desires. He calls it 'resume building',

*…the employer makes the employee more employable and in return the employee will add value to the organisation and make a contribution. (Montefiore, 2006).*

McCrindle Research (2006), undertook a survey of 3,000 Australians in 2006 to better understand Gen Y in the workforce. They then validated the quantitative findings with groups of Gen Y employees. Some interesting findings emerged:

- Generation Y don't seek a job as much as they seek an opportunity.
- It isn't just the job description but the workplace culture, the variety, fun, training, management style, and flexibility that drives them
- Size did not define an employer of choice but rather perceived opportunity/challenge, as well as enjoyment/variety/lifestyle.
- Salary alone wasn't a drawcard
- Gen Y wanted a clear reason to join the organisation and one that resonated with their workplace priorities

It was clear that employment branding was essential to attracting a Gen Y employee (McCrindle Research, 2006).

In the same survey, by McCrindle Research (2006), it was found that recruiting Gen Y happens through recruitment agencies, online job boards, and only 3 % through the company websites. The 3-click rule on a company's website is a factor influencing or deterring Gen Y from applying for jobs through a company's website. Interestingly, although half of those surveyed had been to TAFE or University, only 2 % had found employment through their Campus Career Advisor or through Careers Expos. They indicated that at Career Expos they wanted to talk with company's recent recruits not 'older' HR professionals, however, at an interview the age of the interviewer was not considered important (McCrindle Research, 2006).

## Nurturing Organisations best suited to Gen Y

Avril Henry believes the organisations best suited to Gen Y are those that *"… invest in training and development for managers…"* and those that place, *"… particular emphasis on soft skills, such as performance management and conflict resolution"* (Finch). Further, Henry advises that managers should be acutely aware of the different values and views of each generation, particularly in regard to aspects of work-life balance, family and career, flexibility and loyalty with regard to the organisation.

The challenge for employers of Gen Y is to provide work that they can be dedicated to. Gen Y is not afraid to leave a job that is not perfectly suited to them (Schriever & Lenaghan, 2007). According to McCrindle Research (2006), only one in four Gen Y's would consider staying with a single employer for 5 years. Further, 86 % of Gen Y's expect a promotion within 2 years of being with a company (McCrindle Research, 2006). Training was also highly rated with 89.6 % indicating that if training was received regularly that they would be more motivated to stay with the employer. The desire for variety, challenges and change will motive a move, not lack of loyalty to the organisation.

Korn (2007) believes if a company wants to keep Gen Y on the books for longer, then employers should find them mentors. Further, Gen Y is more loyal to the team than to the company, so a mentor relationship is more likely to keep a Gen Y person in the company

(Korn, 2007). As Korn (2007) says, *"... it's the little cups of coffee, it's a little chat here and there, it's a little tap on the back…"*. This builds a relationship, and the relationship is with the mentor and the team, rather than the organisation.

McCrindle Research (2006) has suggested that mentoring with Gen Y should flow both ways.

> *Let the older share experience and expertise while the younger can give insights into engaging with their generation and the new times.*

For successful mentoring, it is useful to define the generations sociologically and look at the training and learning focus of the Baby Boomers compared to Gen Y. Baby Boomers responded to technical approaches and data evidence, whereas Gen Y responds to the emotional involvement, stories and participative interactions. The learning format of the Baby Boomers was formal and structured, whereas for Gen Y it is spontaneous and multi-sensory (McCrindle Research, 2006).

Public opinion believes Gen Y seeks a boss, leader, mentor who provides 'inspirational' leadership and who listens and involves them (Finch). The ideal leader for a Gen Y employee is one who leads by consensus and who is collaborative (McCrindle Research, 2006). Gen Ys are collaborative learners who enjoy working in teams and respond to consensus-driven group decision making (McCrindle Research, 2006). The relationship with peers at work is highly regarded by Gen Y.

## Gen Y Women

My personal perspective is that Gen Y women in the workplace are very little different from Gen Y men in the workplace. The workplace belief systems, motivators, ambitions and characteristics of the generation appear to be shared across both sexes.

It is likely Gen Y will be mentored by Baby Boomers rather than Gen X, simply because Baby Boomers remain in the senior positions and are prepared to give time to this younger generation and because there is tension between Gen X and Gen Y. Baby Boomers are the parents of Gen Y and more use to their behaviour. There is a bond between the Baby Boomers and Gen Y, with the parent/child relationship and the possibility that Gen Y is a 'living manifestation' of the desires and dreams that the parents wanted for their children (Montefiore, 2006). Baby Boomer women appear comfortable to nurture and mentor Gen Y women.

The significant difference between the Baby Boomer women and Gen Y women is that the Baby Boomers were often parents by their mid-twenties, whereas Gen Y are not even considering parenting by their mid-twenties. Indeed Gen Y wants to delay the socially accepted milestones: marriage, mortgage, kids (Cooke, 2007). This change in the time of parenting will have a significant impact on the career progression of Gen Y women. This is something that Baby Boomers who are mentoring Gen Y women need to be aware of. Gen Y women will attain career achievements and promotions at a much faster rate and much earlier in their working life than their Baby Boomer mentors.

When mentoring Gen Y women, do not take into account their parenting expectations, or planned time out of the workforce – Gen Y are not factoring that in, so neither should the mentor.

## Nurturing Gen Y Women

The research appears to be telling us that to nurture Gen Y women in the workplace and socially we need to be:

- Building relationships based on honestly
- Connecting through emotional involvement, stories and participative interactions
- Working creatively in consensus-driven teams
- Working with technology in a spontaneous and multi-sensory way
- Providing inspirational leadership
- Branding our employment opportunities
- Flexible in the workplace, especially with career breaks, flexible hours and part-time work
- Providing ongoing professional and personal development opportunities, including the 'soft' skills
- Having fun in the workplace
- Accepting the milestones of marriage, mortgage and kids is flexible and personal

## Gen Y in Australian higher education

There is presently only a small number of Gen Y employed in higher education institutions in Australia. It is worth looking at the EO Report of each university, to see the age, gender and employment classification groupings of both administrative and academic staff. There is also a low number of Gen X employed. The majority of middle management and senior management in higher education, both in administration and in academic areas, remain the Baby Boomers.

Gen Xs have found it hard to secure positions and to progress due to the bottleneck of Baby Boomers. Gen Y is now knocking on the door and they want to be the new generation researchers and the shining light administrators. The next five to ten years will see significant changes for both Gen X and Gen Y. Succession planning should be at the forefront of all university planning discussions.

## The Future

In the workforce we train employees for all manner of 'diversity', tolerance and rights of others, for example, gender diversity, cultural diversity, religious tolerance,

disability awareness, but, what we do not inform ourselves about is generational diversity and the need to nurture each generation to achieve the best it can. Embracing generational diversity in the workplace is a significant challenge as the Baby Boomers retire and the Gen X and Gen Y take the reins.

Mark McCrindle of McCrindle Research (2006) has identified the key factors which have brought us to look so carefully at our present state of play:

*...Occasionally in history massive demographic change combines with relentless technological change and within a generation society altogether changes. Today we are living in such an era.*

It is clear from McCrindle's work that we need to understand that demography is shaping the future, rather than technology; and, that we need to capitalise and nurture generational diversity. These are two significant challenges we face in 2007 and beyond.

## References


ABC News. (2007). *Gen Y likely to be big users of credit: agency.* ABC News. 14 March, 2007. http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/03/14/1871864.htm.

Adonis, J. (2007). *Managers unhappy with Gen Y.* ABC News 29 July, 2007. http://www.abc.net.au/newsstories/2007/07/29/1991044.htm.

Casben, L. (2007). *Employers slate generation Y.* ABC News 13 July, 2007. http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/07/13/1977679.htm.

Cooke, D. (2007). *Gen Y tries before it buys.* Age 21st April, 2007.

Financial Services Institute of Australia. (2007). *The Generation Game.* http://news.finsia.efinancialcareers.com.au/ITEM_FR/newsItemId-717.

Finch, M. (n. d.). *Leadership needs the X and Y factors.* http://lawyersweekly.com.au/articles/11/0c035a11.asp.

Gibbs, K. (2005). Old rules don't reign in recruiting Generation Y. *Lawyers Weekly.* http://lawyersweekly.com.au/articles/11/0c035a11.asp

Schriever, J., & Lenaghan, N. (2007). *Avoid gen Y, bosses told. They're selfish, fickle and don't trust employers*. Career One, The Advertiser, 23 June, 2007.

Matchett, S. (2007). *The wry side.* The Australian, 25 July, 2007.

McCrindle Research. (2006). *New generations at work: Attracting, recruiting, retraining & training Generation Y.* www.mccrindle.com.au.

Montefiore, I, (2006). *Stuff the house I'm going to Mexico*, ABC Great Southern WA, 29 June, 2006. http://www.abc.net.au/greatsouthern/storiess1673823.htm.

Patterson, B, (2007). *A-Z of generation Y*, Herald Sun, 8 July, 2007. http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,22034750-5006016,00.html.

# Women Approaching Retirement: Reflections, Issues and Hopes

**Brigid Limerick (b.limerick@uq.edu.au)**
**Mary McMahon (marylmcmahon@uq.edu.au)**
**Neil Cranston (n.cranston@uq.edu.au)**
**Cheryl Andersen (cherylan@powerup.com.au)**
School of Education,
The University of Queensland, St Lucia QLD 4067 Australia

**Abstract**

This paper provides insight into the pre-retirement phase of women's careers. It is based on interviews with women who indicated in an earlier study that they were anticipating retiring after long careers in the public sector in Queensland. As the workforce ages and the proportion of the workforce in the pre-retirement age group grows, it is important to understand the experiences and resultant needs of these workers. The interview invited the women to reflect on their careers and discuss their current experiences as they move towards retirement. The study, which is essentially exploratory in nature, found the women had changing patterns of worklife balance across their lives and that throughout their careers in the public service they had experienced issues relate to, organisational culture and organisational structure. Currently the women are experiencing issues related to their age and impending retirement such as worklife balance, financial considerations and planning beyond paid employment in the public service. The study draws attention to employment issues faced by women approaching retirement from the public sector and suggests that organisations could benefit by identifying ways in which they could better harness the potential contribution of older women.

## Introduction and Background

The participants in this study completed Women in Management (WIM) courses offered by the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) between 1990 and 1994. The courses were supported by one large public sector department and the Queensland Office of the Public Service and were offered to women identified by their supervisors as potential future senior managers in the public and private sectors. The course was designed to equip participants with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence they would require to gain promotion and perform well in managerial roles (Limerick, Heywood & Ehrich, 1995). The researchers have followed the careers of these women since that time (e.g., Limerick & Andersen, 1999; McMahon, Limerick, Cranston, & Andersen, 2006). In the time since the courses the percentage of the women in middle and senior management had increased, although not to the extent one might have anticipated given that the women had been targeted as high flyers by their supervisors. While not content with their classification levels (i.e., seniority), most of the women viewed their careers as successful and most were satisfied or very satisfied with what they had achieved and their ability to manage work, life and family balance (McMahon et al., 2006). Some of these women are now moving towards retirement and it is that group which provides the focus of this paper.

In terms of career development theory, this pre-retirement stage has been termed disengagement (Super, 1990) and typically sees workers experiencing a "decline in energy for and interest in their occupation" (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996) and retirement planning. These theorists also recognize that people assume many roles in their lives at any particular point in time (e.g., worker, family member) and that worker may not be the most central role. Disengagement is a time when many workers review their lives and achievements as part of the transition process, explore available options and contemplate re-establishing themselves with perhaps a new life structure and different lifestyle.

More recently, O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) theorised three phases in a woman's career:

- *Phase 1* (women aged 24 – 35) is characterised as a phase of "idealistic achievement" (p. 182) when women see themselves as being in charge of their careers and are strategically planning how to achieve success.
- *Phase 2* (women aged 36-45) is characterised as a phase of "pragmatic endurance" (p. 183) when women are of an age when family responsibilities are most likely to impact heavily on careers. This is the most dissatisfied group who often find their career stalled at middle management level.
- *Phase 3* (women aged 46-60) is characterised as a phase of "reinventive contribution" (p. 184) when women have come to see a career as a chance to make a meaningful contribution.

Phase three is that most relevant to the women in this study. O'Neil and Bilimoria suggested that reinventive contribution is the driving force of such women who yearn to make a valuable contribution to their organisations, families and communities. During their careers, they are likely to have experienced periods where their professional lives have subsumed their personal lives. In essence, O'Neil and Bilimoria claim

that in this phase women have "reconceptualised and reclaimed their careers in their lives as opportunities to contribute and be of service to others without losing sight of themselves in the process" (p. 184).

O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) found that respect, recognition and worklife balance are major contributors to these women's sense of success, and that they value learning, fairness, justice and making a meaningful contribution. Similarly, in South Australia, executive and junior women working in the public sector identified work-life balance, selection and recruitment and career mentoring and support as the three major issues affecting women in the workplace (Lundberg, 2005). These factors are illustrative of those that could be described as extrinsic success and intrinsic success, the two broad components of career success (Robson, Hansson, Abalos, & Booth, 2006). Examples of extrinsic success include pay level and seniority (Siebert & Kraimer, 2001). Intrinsic success is subjectively defined by workers themselves in relation to their own goals and expectations and may become more important as workers age (Siebert & Kraimer, 2001).

The women in the present study form part of what has frequently been described as the aging workforce. Employers are experiencing difficulty in finding skilled workers and consequently the development and retention of older workers is becoming increasingly important for many organisations (Robson, Hansson, Abalos, & Booth, 2006). For example, the goals of the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia include an employment system that recognises the importance of retaining mature age workers and the removal of barriers to their continued participation (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001). The contribution of women in the "reinventive contribution" (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005, p. 184) phase of their careers could present a potentially rich resource for public sector organisations to tap into.

The aim of the present study was to investigate employment issues faced by women approaching retirement from the public sector. A further aim was to consider the women's careers in light of O'Neil and Bilimoria's (2005) career phase of reinventive contribution.

## Method

### Participants

Participants in the study were eight women who indicated in an earlier study (McMahon et al., 2006) that they anticipated retiring in the next five years and that they would be willing to participate in an interview. Their ages range from 56 to 69 and thus roughly parallel the age range of O'Neil and Bilmoria's (2005) third phase of women's career development, that of reinventive contribution. At the time of the interviews, three of the women were married, three were divorced and two had partners. Five of the women had children. One of the women worked at a senior management level, while the remainder held middle-level management positions. All had long careers in the public service, albeit for some, those years had been disrupted by time taken away from work for child and family demands.

### Instrument

The interviews were semi structured in-depth interviews (Merriam, 1998) through which the interviewees were invited to reflect critically on their careers. The Interview Aide Memoir (Silverman, 2000) covered six areas derived from the "Women's Reflections on Their Careers" survey (McMahon et al, 2006), specifically:

- Background and feelings about their current position
- Reflections on their careers covering areas such as
  - career management and progression
  - career success
  - career satisfaction
  - impacts/influences on career
  - anything they might have done differently in hindsight with respect to their careers
- Work/life balance at various stages of their careers
- Looking ahead to retirement
- Advice/suggestions to young women starting in the public service

Finally, the women were invited to make any other general reflective comments with respect to their careers.

### Procedure

The interviews were conducted in locations and at times convenient to each participant. As a result, some interviews were held in offices, others in less formal settings such as cafes. They generally lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. The women were provided with a copy of the Interview Aide Memoir prior to the interview to encourage them to reflect on the matters for discussion before the actual interview. With the permission of participants, interviews were recorded and later transcribed. All identifying data were removed, such that the anonymity of participants was assured. Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality.

## Results

The views of the women are considered under the following headings: career reflections, issues, and hopes. Quotes from the interviews are included in

italics with pseudonyms attached. Pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality.

## Career Reflections

Most of the women viewed their careers as successful and most were satisfied or very satisfied with what they had achieved. For example, Margaret, provided a succinct summary of those features which on reflection she felt made a career satisfying: *"I think I've accomplished some of my dreams. I have had and still have jobs that really challenge me and are complex, I work within a really strong professional team and I really do feel part of that team so in a way that satisfies me and I know that I have a number of people around me that are highly supportive of me and I have those networks to be able to debrief and talk through particular things and (they are) honest with me so in that sort of professional way I feel very satisfied."*

Some regrets and dissatisfaction were expressed by the women. Gwen regretted that she has no real power as her classification levels means that *"I'm just below the line where people listen", and* similarly, Elizabeth regretted "*… you are a little fish in a big pond whereas if you can be in a smaller pond you can be more influential".* Some participants regretted the years they have given to the public service rather than getting out and doing their own thing "*without having to get approval from so many blessed people to be able to do it….I haven't closed the door to the fact that I may still do that"(Elizabeth).* Little regret was expressed by the women who took time off when their children were young despite the fact that they all felt that this had a deleterious impact on their career and on their superannuation which is why many of them are working full time longer than they would choose to.

Except for the most senior of this group (Margaret) and Joan, who was persuaded to return from a voluntary retirement, most of the women did not feel that they were being encouraged to make a meaningful contribution to their organisation. As Susan put it: "*if you ask me about women in the public service I think the biggest group now to be looking at is older women and how they are going to get us back in, I have a lot to contribute. I have a lot of skills and I could do a heap of things".* Margaret was still confident she was making a real contribution to her organisation and expressed no dissatisfaction with her role. Susan and Elizabeth expressed some disquiet that their contribution was not as valuable as it once had been. The women are still working extremely hard but in many ways finding their work unproductive, due to the lack of acknowledgement of their skills (quote from May) and that they are tired and feel they need to cover this up as the organisation is unsympathetic to putting strategies in place which would allow them to work more flexibly. Public service employers could make life much easier for older women Gwen noted: "*They could apply the policies that are there … very good policies … but unfortunately they're up to the manager and if you have a manager who is not very sympathetic …".*

## Issues

Age, worklife balance, and working in the public sector itself were the main were the most important issues discussed by the women.

**Age** The women felt strongly about the issue of being seen as old in the public service and what this stereotyping did to their credibility. Some also spoke about being tired and their feeling that they could contribute much more if they were able to organize their time more flexibly. For example, Susan reported that "*Everyone says they want older people….They do no ... No one wants to interview anyone over 55".* Carol concurred and hinted that more could be done in the organisation to retain older workers "*They're starting to talk about planning and valuing the older ones, because there are a few around me who have just this huge depth of knowledge over the last 20 to 30 years, and if not encouraged they will go …".*

**Work-life Balance** All of the women indicated that their work-life balance had changed over the course of their careers as they adapted in response to their family responsibilities. For example, Susan who had no children and was single described how earlier in her career she had seen herself as: *"A career girl … working to 7 nearly every night …".* She reflected on how her priorities have changed and she is no longer career driven – her extended family and partner are now very important to her. Elizabeth, felt that she did maintain a balance between her work and her personal life while her two children lived at home but for a period after they left home work became very important to her and as a result: "*That was a period when work-life balance was starting to really go astray …We've given more than our fair share …to our respective organisations. The work is there to do so you just do it".* However, her husband's retirement and the arrival of grandchildren have led to a reassessment of her priorities and she is now placing more emphasis on her personal and family life.

**The Individual and the Public Sector** All of the participants discussed their relationship with the organisation for which they worked. Their discussion focused on issues related to the public sector culture and departmental structure.

In commenting on public sector culture, Susan was the most outspoken and brought gender to the forefront of the discussion. "*I think my personality as a female has been a huge barrier…I've been too outspoken, and everywhere I have been I've been successful and I've brought in amazing changes … I argue too much … a lot of the older blokes … remind me of my father who*

*found me irritating in the extreme".* There was a sense amongst the women, that gender bias is no longer as overt as it once might have been, but that it may still have a negative impact on some women's career prospects. Elizabeth had always found her organisation supportive with a strong policy of supporting women. However when discussing the importance of mentors for career progression she was hesitant about male mentors feeling that same sex mentors worked better as "*It depends on the personality (of the mentor) but I tended to think women have a better understanding of where you're coming from … I don't think men fully appreciate the subtleties of it. They've never had to experience it……men have been good to work shadow but not necessarily as a mentor".* All of those interviewed stated that they mentored younger women albeit in very different ways.

All of the women interviewed have many years' experience in the public sector in Queensland and most departments having undergone a number of restructures in the last fifteen years. Elizabeth stated that *"Change doesn't worry me … I get quite excited …reorganizing the way we do things in the hope that we might achieve something better. Sometimes I think that reorganisations are a waste of time and haven't led to anything worthwhile …".* Restructuring had resulted in Joan retiring early after being restructured into a position where she felt she had little to offer. After her retirement, she expressed surprise that "*...they'd ring me and ask me would I do this … and sometimes I was amazed that they thought I had the capacity to do some of the jobs they asked me to do".* Joan is now in the process of retiring again. May also left the public service after a restructure and then been forced to return for financial reasons to a lower position. She felt that her skills were not recognized or valued in her current position and commented on the frustration of seeing younger people struggling with jobs that based on her past experiences she felt that she could do with no trouble.

### Hopes

In expressing their hopes for the future, the women discussed work-life balance and in particular the importance of spending time with family, financial security, and possible alternative work arrangements.

How many hours one would like to work to maintain a balanced lifestyle in one's 60s and be truly useful to one's organisation is an issue that all those interviewed referred to. For example Susan explained that "*I've put in a lot of hours in the past … I would work 9 to 10 hours every day because I enjoyed it …… But now I would like to work three days a week …My brother has got a three year old daughter…and we just get along and I don't want to miss out on her growing up…".* Elizabeth reflected on her desire at this stage of her life to keep her husband company now he has retired and "*feels as though he is in a holding pattern until I have a bit more time and we can do (things) together".* Gwen needed more balance with seven grandchildren and commented that "*in one sense I'm 65 and I'm amazed I'm still working …but basically I'm very overloaded at the moment and I'm not getting many concessions. I really want to work part time and have Fridays off".*

Financial security and superannuation are now looming large as the women consider the prospect of financing themselves for a possible further thirty years. All had been to financial planners for advice as to how to maximize their income when they retired. Elizabeth summarized the position that most women her age now find themselves in. "*I had to resign to have a family. Super was all closed down and paid out … My career didn't start until I was 34 so I was 15 years behind".* Due to her broken public service career and divorce May was particularly worried about the lack of money "*for example not being able to afford a big dental bill"* as there would be a dramatic change of income from "*$70,000 to $20,000"* on which to live. For a few this exacerbated their feeling that they had to stay on longer than they wished to.

Despite this there was a general impression that the women would miss paid work and the companionship and were considering a variety of options to ease the transfer out of the public service. They were "incubating" (Heffernan, 2004) a range of ideas from consultancies to project work to international work to community work where they felt they could best use their skills. Unless they were consulting back to the public service, these skills would be lost to the public service. Carol had "*…enquired about being able to use long service leave flexibly so that in the last years of your working life you can work part time, but on a salary because you have earned the leave",* while Kaye had been looking at what other public servants were doing, *"…after a while you reengage to do some sort of contract work for a company or their own former department … like a transition".* Margaret argued that planning for retirement should be discussed much more openly and claimed that "*...you really have to work out how you want to leave an organisation and you should plan that exit strategy and the exit strategy is quite a long period of time".* Elizabeth is consciously working out what she wants to do "*... I'm thinking I might take some long service leave"* to give herself time to consider her future being well aware of the statistics of longevity.

## Discussion

All of the women in the present study are in the pre-retirement stage of their careers described as disengagement (Super, 1990). Regardless of the levels they are at in the organisation, they all felt that within

their own terms they had had successful careers. Success for them now relates to recognition of their worth, respect for their skills, enjoyment of their work while making a meaningful contribution, intrinsic success (Siebert & Kraimer, 2001). There is clear evidence that the worker role is only one role in their lives (Super, 1990) and that it may be lessening in importance to these women as they consider their futures. The ability to live an integrated, balanced life and to spend time with their families seems to be assuming a greater importance.

Consistent with O'Neil and Bilimoria's (2005) career phase of reinventive contribution, these women were seeking opportunities to contribute in terms of work and family responsibilities. In the phase of reinventive contribution, women focus on what they could contribute to organisations by using their relational skills in leadership or team of task-oriented roles or coaching and mentoring others (O'Neil & Bilmoria, 2005). There can be no doubt that these women are able to make real contributions. But is the public service ready or able to effectively utilise such contributions? Many of these women expressed concerns about being perceived as older in the public sector and many were exploring life options that incorporate paid work in forms other than paid full time work. However, it seems likely that the potential contribution of these women could be lost to their present organisations as the women are seeking more flexible work arrangements which do not seem easily available to them despite the goals of the National Strategy for an Ageing Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).

Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther in their book *Managing the New Organisation: Collaboration and Sustainability in the Post-Corporate World* (2002) described how an Australian bank, desperate to keep their highly trained female employees when they left to have children, "went back to these women and asked: 'How do we (the bank) have to ***be*** in order to make it possible for you to work for us?' – and changed their entire organisation to make it lifestream compatible" (p. 198). Perhaps then the critical question that the public service needs to be asking these older women is "How would we have to ***be*** for you to feel that you could make a truly reinventive contribution to this organisation?" There are significant challenges for existing cultures and mindsets for many public sector organisations if they are to respond positively to such questions. But there may well be a critical imperative for them to do so in the near future as the impending retirement of many baby boomers in many organisations across the western world is likely to "leak" considerable expertise and experience from their ranks. Reinventive contribution may be one strategy that might stem that "leak" allowing many women especially to continue to make contributions in paid work, albeit on differently constructed terms.

## References


Commonwealth of Australia. (2001). *National strategy for an ageing Australia An older Australia, challenges and opportunities for all*. Retrieved February 8, 2006, from http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/Publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-ofoa-agepolicy-nsaa-nsaa.htm

Heffernan, M. (2004). *The Naked Truth: A Working Woman's Manifesto.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Limerick, B., & Andersen, C. (1999). 'Go out there and go for broke': Senior women and promotion in Education Queensland, Australia. *Women in Management Review ,14,* 37-43.

Limerick, B., Heywood, E., & Ehrich, L. (1995). Women-only Management Courses: Are they appropriate in the 1990s? *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, *33*, 81-92.

Limerick, D., Cunnington, B., & Crowther, F. (2002). *Managing the New Organisation: Collaboration and Sustainability in the Post-Corporate World.* Sydney, Australia: Business and Professional Publishing.

Lundberg, I. (2005). What Women Want. *Public Administration Today*, *March-June*, 44-49.

McMahon, M., Limerick, B., Cranston, N., & Andersen, C. (2006). Going Up? Women in the public sector. *Career Development International*, *11*, 609-618.

Merriman, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

O'Neil, D., & Bilimoria, D. (2005). Women's career development phases: Idealism, endurance, and reinvention. *Career Development International*, *10*, 168-188.

Robson, S. M., Hansson, R. O., Abalos, A., & Booth, M. (2006). Successful aging: Criteria for aging well in the workplace. *Journal of Career Development, 33*, 156-177.

Siebert, S. E., & Kraimer, M. L. (2001). The five-factor model of personality and career success. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 58*, 1-21.

Silverman, D. (2002). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook.* London: Sage.

Super, D. E. (1990). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. In D. Brown, L. Brooks & Others, *Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice* (2nd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Super, D. E., Savickas, M. L., & Super, C, M. (1996). The life-span, life-space approach to careers. In D. Brown, L. Brooks & Associates (Eds.), *Career Choice and Development* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

# Women's Struggle in the Workplace: Examining the Importance of Diverse Cultural Perspectives in Policy and Practice

**Feiziya Patel (f.patel@massey.ac.nz)**
**Kogi Naidoo (k.naidoo@massey.ac.nz)**
Center for Academic Development and ELearning
Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

**Maureen Lewis (mlewis@slingshot.co.nz)**
Ex- Manukau Institute of Technology, New Zealand

**Abstract**

Women's struggles in the workplace are deeply entrenched within their cultural spaces and roles. Organisations have a social responsibility to integrate women's cultural perspectives through supportive policies and practices. The paper critically examines dominance of the Western cultural norm and the absence of an understanding of woman's cultural perspectives in the global workplace. It also reviews the implications of women's cultural roles and responsibilities in the workplace. Finally, the paper concludes with recommendations to integrate women's cultural perspectives and worldviews in work place policies and practices.

## Introduction

Attempting to understand how women live life on the edge is only the beginning of a long and exhausting journey that is fraught with poignant anecdotes describing how and why women continue to struggle for recognition, respect and dignity in the twenty first century. In the context of the contributions to the global workplace, it means that women have broken through various barriers such as class, caste, age, religion, race, gender, and disability only to remain on the edge. How women overcome these barriers is a story that only women (and few men) know, appreciate and understand.

The co-authors of this paper bring to it their unique cultural perspectives that remain embedded in their histories, families and religious convictions. They decided to tell their stories in two ways: first, in an edited book collection; and secondly, by presenting a paper that challenges conference delegates to question the hegemony of the Western cultural norm in a century when global diversity demands an alternative perspective and worldview in the workplace.

This paper is framed within the organisational communication and intercultural communication framework as it relates to the impact of women's cultural roles and responsibilities in the workplace. It questions the continued acceptance of Western cultural norms in the global workplace. Women's ways of knowing and doing are culturally entwined at a deep level that is influenced by their family roles, historical contexts, and religious or spiritual beliefs and practices. It is imperative that organisations re-examine and rewrite their organisational policies and practices to ensure that women's cultural perspectives are understood, respected and integrated in the organisational culture and communication.

In summary, the paper challenges the status quo of a dominant Western cultural model in the workplace in the twenty first century when the global workforce has become culturally diverse. Further, it implores delegates to critically examine the exclusion of women's cultural perspectives in the workplace. Other critical questions include: why women's cultural perspectives remain absent in a globally diverse workplace; how we can build on the richness of diverse cultural perspectives; what women (and men) can do to make the global workplace more inclusive in policy and practice; and why the cultural essence of women's perspectives remains absent in fora such as this one.

### Women's Cultural Perspectives and Identities

Women's cultural perspectives in the context of this paper is defined as a worldview that is deeply woven into the complex fabric of culture and it is a perspective that remains firmly embedded in the belief and value systems of family, history, religion or spirituality. Family, history and religion (or spirituality), according to Samovar and Porter (2005) are regarded as deep structures of culture. Women have various family roles and responsibilities, and in some cultures women are also responsible for taking care of religious obligations in the household. Ishii, Klopf, and Cooke (as cited in Samovar & Porter, p. 31) endorse the view that religion "is a deep and pervasive determinant of worldview". Women's cultural perspectives and worldviews therefore define who they are and how they perceive the world around them. For working women this includes their work environment.

We have a social responsibility to demand that global organisations recognise and integrate women's cultural perspectives and identities before we can demand social justice in the workplace. However, we cannot seek social justice without seeking a commitment to social responsibility on a personal and community level. Women's cultural perspectives and identities will always be an embodiment of their family roles, historical contexts and spiritual practices. However, their cultural identities and perspectives, based on their shared history, origin and biology, are grossly underplayed and not recognised in the workplace. "For a cultural identity to be recognised, the identity needs to

be claimed and communicated in some way", according to Collier (as cited in Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 418).

The global workplace continues to model a strong patriarchal structure which is also part of the dominant Western paradigm and many cultures. Wood (2005, p. 29) claims that "western culture as well as many other cultures" are patriarchal "where the ideology, structure and practices were created by men.". Court (as cited in Dunn, 1997, p. 216), who conducted a study of management styles in education in New Zealand, maintains that "what must change is the hegemony that reinforces ideas and structures that maintain certain kinds of male individuals as the deciders of society and the definers of culture." This also reaffirms Wood's (2005, p. 9) argument that "western culture as a whole has constructed inequalities between women and men and these inequalities continue in our era." Women continue to be ignored, disregarded and trampled over in various ways. Reardon (as cited in Dunn, p. 166) calls this dismissive behaviour "dysfunctional communication patterns or DCPs". According to Reardon, these "dismissive DCPs or the most common dysfunctional pattern of male-female interaction at work involves dismissing women by interrupting, talking over, or ignoring them." Women must therefore reclaim their cultural identity and communicate it in every sphere of their workplace role and challenge the dominant Western workplace cultural norms with renewed courage.

## Challenging the Dominant Western Cultural Model in the Workplace

The Western cultural model continues to dominate in the workplace. Martin and Knight (1997, p. 72) emphasise the pervasive nature of dominant culture "which is powerful enough to impose its norms, values and ideas on the cultural practices of an entire society…". Many of us experience the power of dominant Western culture, and ways in which "people with control of the economic power and the political apparatus also have the power to impose their ideas" (Martin & Knight, p. 72). Many organisations endorse Western practices of introducing special accommodations and tokens in the workplace to make it more equitable. Corporate and organisational mission and vision statements express commitment to disability, gender equity, and diversity enhancements in the workplace. Often, except for superficial changes to policy and practice, no change in attitude takes place within the core organisational value and belief systems. Understanding and respecting core cultural values is required for a change in attitude and only when attitudes change will organisations succeed in their quest for a more equitable work environment. Core values and changes in attitude have to be communicated clearly at all levels. The communication of ideas through a diverse range of appropriate means is powerful in ensuring the success of one's vision. According to Geist-Martin, Ray, and Sharf (2003), communication has the power to include, empower and to advocate for, or to isolate, disenfranchise and marginalise individuals and communities. A critical review of disability, gender equity, and diversity policies reveals that these operate at a superficial and safe level in most global organisations and corporations.

## Examining Western Constructs of Policies and Practices around Disability, Gender Equity and Diversity

Commitment to disability, gender equity and diversity almost never goes deeper than special accommodations and tokens. Disability is a term that is often interchanged with handicap and misused. According to Draithwaite and Braithwaite (as cited in Samovar & Porter, 2003, p. 166), disability refers to "limitations that one can overcome or compensate by some means" while a disability (p. 167) "becomes a handicap when a physical or social environment impedes a person in some way.". This means that organisations simply establish policies and practices to 'accommodate' disabilities in the physical environment but these policies do not necessarily remove the hindrances in the social environment. For example, irrespective of the company's policy on disability and the various physical accommodations (such as car park and building access or leave policies), disabled persons may continue to be marginalised by other organisational members who do not wish to associate with them because of stereotypical views and prejudice against people with disabilities. Women who are disabled remain outside the mainstream of society and are at a higher risk of being exploited, even by women. Mental and physical disabilities and various forms of debilitating diseases such as polio, cancer and HIV/AIDS ensure that women, more than men, remain in the shadows – unseen and unheard.

Gender equity does not include policies and practices that recognise women's cultural perspectives and identities in the workplace. Again, policies and practices regarding gender equity relate to services and special accommodations for women (such as wage parity, maternity leave and child care). However, "women are dismissed when they are overlooked for promotion" and they are discredited and not given their due when their creative ideas are stolen by men and passed off as their own. According to Reardon, "dismissing women involves stealing their ideas" (as cited in Dunn, 1997, p. 168). Another strategy that many global organisations continue to use as a special accommodation policy is tokenism which permits them

to hire "more" women workers in their organisations. Tokenism, according to Kanter (as cited in Dunn, 1997, p. 162), marginalises women further because they "are present in skewed groups in organisations (i.e. groups in which there is a great preponderance of men", and especially when "group dynamics develop to inhibit their success". In other words, there may be more women or even a larger number of culturally diverse women but men still outnumber women in organisations.

Commitment to diversity does not go beyond tokenism and the hiring of a few more black, brown and coloured faces. It is interesting to note the low level of priority that this actually receives and the superficial level at which it operates. This gap in integrating cultural diversity in the workplace is also evident in the New Zealand Census of Women's Participation Report (2006). While the Report tables an elaborate agenda for change, highlighting the importance of gender balance in women's participation in the workforce, we note that "very few data sets were used to compile the Census report on ethnicity" (p. 2). This absence is shocking when we are conscious of the contributions of ethnic and/or cultural factors in the workforce. Commitment to diversity should include intercultural competence development policies and practices for all staff. The workplace provides a range of such opportunities if only organisations are willing to use them in positive ways. Besides the local resident employees from culturally diverse backgrounds, another group that suffers extreme hardship in the workplace is migrants. Organisations do not have adequate core-value oriented policies and practices in place to provide professional development to migrants. In a research project (Lewis, 2005) on women's acculturation into the New Zealand workforce, women migrants reflected on their past work experience in their home countries, their reasons for migrating to New Zealand, and their experience of starting work at a large, multicultural polytechnic. Women felt vulnerable and expected guidance and encouragement and had a need to know if they were fitting into the organisational culture. However, there is a general lack of inclusive orientation and mentoring programmes to integrate culturally diverse communities into the workplace.

## Challenges of Migrants in the Global Workforce

Migrants around the world know well the story of fitting into the workforce of their newly adopted countries. Immigrants and refugees suffer extreme forms of discrimination and prejudice even though organisational mission and vision statements (of corporate and higher education institutions alike) claim commitment to diversity in the workplace. Often, the display of commitment to diversity is limited to either multicultural dinners or fashion shows and festivals. These practices do not establish a deep and respectful understanding of the fundamental family, religious or spiritual and historical values that relate to the form of dress or the dietary preference of diverse cultural communities. Also, institutional policies in many higher education institutions make dispensations for cultural diversity and integration among students but the same level of commitment is absent when it comes to staff in those organisations. Lewis (2005) found that migrant women in New Zealand felt isolated and marginalised within the higher education institution where they were employed as lecturers as they were left very much to their own devices despite years of experience in their home countries. Few had opportunities to contribute their own voice to joint decision making or practices. In the same study, a Croatian migrant lecturer claimed that there was no mechanism for dealing with new staff and she found "that immigrants are not part of any committee in which they can choose or change anything. And then you don't have a voice because you are left outside" (Lewis, p. 101). Another English immigrant stated that she felt very vulnerable and that she was hesitant to express her needs in the workplace while an Indian South African felt "disempowered as a migrant" (p. 101) and cited ethnicity as an issue. Global organisations have a social and moral responsibility to adopt inclusive policies and practices that will not isolate and marginalise women because special accommodation and tokenism are no longer acceptable.

## Conflicting Cultural Models: Western Culture Versus the Other Cultures

Many global organisations favour Western workplace norms and may either not recognise the institution of family and religion, for example, or may hold a negative ethnocentric worldview that only Western cultural norms are significant. According to Klyukanov (2003), viewing one's culture as superior to another is an application of the negative use of ethnocentrism and does not contribute to the overall understanding of diverse cultures. No culture is superior to and/or better than another. Women's cultural perspective may also be devalued because it is different from the Western cultural context of one's professional training and education may be the only frame of reference. Therefore, viewing the world through Western eyes may create conflict on a personal and professional level. Western agendas and culture continue to impact on all aspects of our lives, social settings and workplace policies and practices. Thussu (2000, p. 30) confirms that even today, "the West, led by the USA, emerged as the key agenda-setter in the area of international communication." The Western paradigm has long been regarded as superior and other cultural perspectives

become almost obsolete in the global political economy framework.

The continued acceptance of the Western cultural norm has also resulted in the practice of women imitating male-like roles, dress and behaviour. In a New Zealand study of senior women executives, Olsson and Walker (2004, p. 244) found that "women engage in processes of identification and differentiation comparable to those of men." Current trends in women's fashion resemble men's grey and black suit and tie apparel and even women's style of communication has become more aggressive and demanding like men. Kanter (as cited in Dunn, 1997, p. 162) attributes this to the fact that women hired as tokens or "women tokens in the workplace tend to downplay their difference in a number of ways among which 'dressing like men' is a display of fitting into the old boys' club". This attempt to assimilate is an important development in communicating the message that women can do what men do. There are many implications of integrating women's perspectives.

### Integration of Women's Cultural Perspectives: Implications

Women's cultural perspectives may be integrated in various ways. These include contributions to redefining work spaces; seeking consensus on acceptable norms of workplace behaviour; establishing mission and vision statements; devising policies and practices; and establishing a social responsibility ethic among the organisational community that is inclusive and respectful of women's cultural perspectives.

Defining a work space in a new century when women (and men) no longer work within the confines of a physical workplace outside their homes will become the greater challenge. Furthermore, we need to establish acceptable norms of workplace behaviour in a culturally diverse workforce. Global organisations are encouraged to blend diverse cultural approaches and knowledges that permeate the whole organisation. Finally, establishing a social responsibility ethic would ensure a collective commitment to inclusive practice in the workplace. Without a social responsibility ethic, organisations and employees cannot argue for social justice. Court (as cited in Dunn, 1997, p. 199) contends that the "dominance of particular sets of assumptions about and practices of leadership and management has resulted in other ways of working being overlooked and undervalued."

## Recommendations and the way forward

Organisations must expand their worldviews and perspectives so that disability, gender equity and diversity, for example, are fully embraced as core social responsibility values. This paper concludes with recommendations to integrate women's cultural perspectives into the workplace; make it a more inclusive environment for women; encourage further research into the absence of women's cultural perspectives in the workplace; ensure that the cultural essence of women's knowledge and action is never again absent from any forum on and about women (and men); core values blend diverse cultures and permeate the whole organisation; and that organisations establish a social responsibility ethic.

We have offered various recommendations to what is a rather complex issue. Solutions and answers lie within us as individuals and as communities, and depend on what we are prepared to contribute to the common good of humanity as a whole. Unless women demand their cultural spaces, and receive recognition and respect for their multiple cultural identities in the workplace, the workplace will remain an uncontested space.

## References


Dunn, D. (1997). *Workplace/women's place*. California: Roxbury.

Geist-Martin, P., Ray, E. B., & Sharf, B. F. (2003). *Communicating health personal, cultural, and political complexities*. Toronto: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.

Klyukanov, I. E. (2005) *Principles of intercultural communication*. Boston: Pearson Education.

Lewis, M. (2005). Moving tales: Acculturation experiences of migrant women staff entering a New Zealand polytechnic. *Higher Education Research & Development 24*(1) 95-108.

Martin, M., & Knight, G. (1997). *Communication and mass media culture, domination & oppression*. Scarborough, Ontario: Prentice-Hall.

Olsson, S., & Walker, R. (2004). "The wo-men and the boys": Patterns of identification and differentiation in senior women executives' representations of career identity. *Women in Management Review, 19*(5). 244-251.

Samovar, L. A., & Porter, E. R. (2003). *Intercultural communication: A reader* (10th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Samovar, L. A., & Porter, E. R. (2005). *Communication between cultures* (5th ed.). Toronto: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.

Thussu, K. D. (2002). *International communication continuity and change*. London: Arnold.

Wood, J. (2005) *Gendered lives: Communication, gender, and culture* (6th ed.). Toronto: Wadsworth Thomson Learning.

# Cracking Japan's Birthrate Conundrum: Women Workers' Conditions

**Lucia Cynita C. Rago (cyrago@mac.com)**
Graduate School of Public Administration
International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan

**Abstract**

Public discussion of the problem of declining birth rate in Japan involves misrecognition of the inequalities experienced by Japanese women in the workplace. Because the problem is largely seen by the Japanese society as caused by women's changing lifestyles, there is a tendency to blame women. Measures designed to address the problem are focused on encouraging women to exert individual effort (*gambaru*) to give birth as opposed to addressing social and economic conditions that are generating the problem in the first place. Labour flexibility schemes are working to recruit women into a secondary part-time employment track which has features unique to Japan among advanced capitalist countries. Seventy two per cent of part-time workers are women, and less than ten per cent of women in paid work enjoy the benefits of Japan's vaunted 'lifetime' employment system. The resulting uneven distribution of job insecurities across genders confirms that the traditional ideologies of *ryosai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) and *otoko wa shigoto, onna wa katei* (men have jobs, women have households) persist in Japan's post-industrial society. For Japan to effectively address its declining birth rate problem it should be ready to undertake thoroughgoing social reforms that undermine the gendered division of labour, discarding the 'male breadwinner' model and move towards the 'dual-earner, dual caregiver' model.

## Government Program and Appeals for Women to Give Birth

In 1964, then Prime Minister Sato Eisaku publicly appealed to women to bear more children following the first major decline in birth rate in postwar Japan (Buckley 1993, as cited in Broadbent, 2003). Recently, the same appeal was echoed by Health Minister Hakuo Yanagisawa when he called women "birth-giving machines" and asked women to give birth as their form of public service. In a news conference the Health Minister said:

> The number of women between the ages of 15 and 50 is fixed. Because the number of birth-giving machines [and] devices is fixed, so all we can ask is that they do their best per head, although it may not be so appropriate to call them machines. (Japan Times, 2007).

The Health Minister's statement was a reaction to the news released earlier in June last year on Japan hitting the lowest recorded fertility rate in 2005. The rate, which measures the number of children an average woman is expected to give birth to over her lifetime, was recorded to be the lowest in 2005 at 1.25 per woman, a decline from 1.29 in 2004. This is so far the lowest fertility rate among developed countries.

Experts state that for Japan to keep its population steady it has to reach the average fertility rate of 2.1 children per woman. But with the recent rate, the Health, Labour and Welfare Ministry revised in December its projected population to go down around "38 million from now to 89.93 million in 2055".

This development, coupled with the rapid aging population of the country which is said to be the biggest among industrialised countries, has sent alarm to the government due to its impending long-term effect on Japan's economy. Analysts predicted this would result to labour shortage, shrinking domestic market, decrease of production, a reduced tax base and a strained pension system.

This has prompted the previous and the current governments to develop several strategies to lift the declining birth rates. In 1995, they promoted the "Angel Plan", a 10-year agenda jointly planned and implemented by four ministries (Ministries of Education, Health, Labour and Construction), which is a "comprehensive and systematic development of measures to support child-rearing" that included the expansion of the number of nurseries and facilities to support working mothers (Statistics Bureau and Statistical Research and Training Institute). Two more "New Angel Plans" were advocated, in 2000-2004 and recently in 2005 (until 2009), with the ministries of Finance and Home Affairs added to the list of government implementers.

But despite government efforts to encourage couples to have more children, no significant improvement is achieved. In fact, statistics show the reverse. Shortly after Prime Minister Abe rebuked Minister Yanagisawa for calling women birth-giving machines, the Health Minister immediately apologised for his "inappropriate remark" (Kyodo News, 2007). Still, it is important not to brush aside his remark because it reflects how the issue of declining birth rate is viewed, especially among government officials. That his statement echoes the pronouncement of the former Prime Minister decades ago only shows the consistency of the view held by the government with regards women's role in the declining birthrate. It has always been the appeal of the government. Their appeal to women to exert more

effort as individuals only shows the tendency of the government to blame women for not doing enough or not contributing to the solution of the decreasing population. Certainly, their views are based on certain assumptions about women that are blind to the social and economic realities in which women are situated.

## The "Changing Lifestyles" of Women

The view that the drop of birthrate in Japan is caused by the "changing lifestyles" of Japanese women, especially young girls nowadays, is prevalent. Although discourses on the changing lifestyles vary in the terms used and explanations given, common in all these discourse is the assumption that women are now becoming more in control of their lives and have more freedom to choose. Among the notable discussions about women's changing lifestyles are the category given to young people (mostly women) as "parasite singles" and freeters, career or working woman who are financially independent and are unwilling to give up their freedom hence they forego marriages.

## The "Parasite Single", "Freeters" and Working Women

The term "parasite single" was coined by sociologist Yamada Masahiro (1999) in his book entitled "Parasito Shinguru no Jidai". According to Yamada, a parasite single is "one who lives with his/her parents even after graduation and is dependent on them for his/her basic living conditions". Supposedly, there is a growing number of men and women from age 20-34 who are foregoing marriage and still living with their parents because they do not want to give up their high-standard of living.

According to government data, the number of "parasite-singles" in Japan was 8.17 million persons and accounted for 29.5% of population aged 20-34 in 1980. In 2003, it increased to 12.11 million persons and 45.4%. In particular, in the latter half of the 1980s, it increased by 1.61 million persons or 6.7 % for these five years (Nishi, 2006).

Yamada (1999, as cited in Lunsing, 2003) particularly emphasised that there are more "parasite" single women than men and even argued that male "parasite" singles are less of a problem because eventually they will get married after saving money. He claims that this trend is the main factor behind the increasing tendency for marrying late, and consequently, for the decline in the birthrate. Yamada holds parasite singles ultimately responsible for the worsening economic crisis in Japan since they are unemployed on purpose and rely on their parents to support them financially. Parasite singles are said to take on jobs akin to a hobby or a pastime which they quit doing should they feel like it.

This attitude or value towards work among young Japanese people is said to endanger the labour supply of the Japanese economy. Because they are not serious enough to become part of the labour force, "most of them drift from one low-skilled job to the next and join the swelling ranks of permanent part-timers. The Japanese call them *freeters*, a word that combines "free" with the German word for a worker, *Arbeiter"*. They are likened to America's slacker generation, without full-time jobs, are living carefree lives and have no plans for the future (The Economist, 2001).

"Parasite singles" and "freeters" are depicted by media and some academics as a "symptom of some awful social sickness that Japan has acquired with its wealth". Unlike the generation of their parents and grandparents who experienced hardships, they are seen to be lacking in strength of character because of the indulgence of their parents (The Economist, 2001).

If we merely look at the statistics, and following Yamada's argument about "parasite single" and "freeters" it seems that young generation of women now, who are at the height of their reproductive age are refusing to get married and give birth simply for "selfish" reasons. Is it really the case? Should we assume that more and more young women are staying at home and staying single because they choose to, or are there environmental factors that may account for this behaviour? Rather than taking these artificial categories at their face value, it is necessary to look at the realities of women in Japanese society to see if these categories really hold water.

## The Realities of Japanese Women

As I shall argue below, young women of childbearing age are the hardest hit by economic hardships. In his book, "A Nagging Sense of Job Insecurity", Genda Yuji (2005) countered the arguments presented by Yamada about "parasite singles". He argued that the phenomenon of "parasite singles" is more a consequence of the rising unemployment rate and a deteriorating employment environment for young people and not the cause of it. When the Japanese economy slowed down due to internal bad debt and intensified globalisation, companies had to resort to restructuring measures that resulted in massive job losses.

In the latest survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour, the total number of workers in all kinds of non-regular employment (this includes part-time workers (*arubaito*s) and dispatched workers from temporary labour agency, contract employees or entrusted employees, has already reached 16.77 million, 440,000 more than the previous year (Ministry of Labour, 2007).

While public discussions, media, as well as government emergency measures have focused on the effect of this restructuring among the middle-aged and elderly white-collar workers, Yuji (2005) argued that in

reality it is the vast majority of young people that is the hardest hit. In 2000, of the 3.2 million recorded as unemployed, the majority are young people and people aged 65 and older, with fewer than 50,000 being middle-aged and older white collar workers (Yuji).

Furthermore, young people are not finding work essentially because companies have chosen to retain middle-aged and elder employees at the expense of new employees. Life-time employment, though gradually shrinking, is being protected for the middle aged workers at the expense of the young people. Moreover, Yuji (2005) argued that "the problem lies in the fact that employment opportunities such as those at large firms — which generally offer higher wages, implicitly promise a long-term job, and enable individual workers to develop their abilities through on-the-job-training — are no longer offered to young people as a matter of course."

For Yuji (2005), while it may be true that more young people are living at home with their parents, especially young women in urban areas, this does not prove that they are parasites. It is equally plausible that they stay with their parents, and stay single because they can not afford to do otherwise. As Lunsing (2003) also pointed out, many women categorised by Yamada as "parasite singles" are actually quite productive, as these women are the ones taking care of the elders and the domestic chores in their house. The terms "parasite single" and "freeters" serve as a smokescreen to hide the real reasons for the hardships suffered by young people.

Following Yuij's (2005) argument, we can now paint a picture where large numbers of young people who are not taken into the full-time regular tracks end up either jobless or as "freeters". "Freeters" are the direct cause of the "push effect" in the decrease in the regular employment. What then are the conditions of these irregular workers? Do they really benefit from this "alternative" set-up?

Due to Japan's long-standing economic stagnation and the imperatives of globalisation, companies are resorting to greater labour flexibility schemes that are working to recruit women into a secondary part-time employment track which has features unique to Japan among advanced capitalist countries. As Kaye Broadbent (2005) has argued, part-time employment is gendered. Seventy two per cent of part-time workers are women, and less than 10% of women in paid work enjoy the benefits of Japan's vaunted 'lifetime' employment system.

While irregular employment is rising in Japan, for Japanese women it is not a new phenomenon for they have always been part-time workers. It is the nature of the part-time work that is changing. Research shows that "the hours, job content and responsibilities of part-time workers in Japan approximate those of the full-time workers, the wages, annual payments, the amount and availability of non-financial benefits, paid holidays, career paths, and training, if they exist at all, discriminate against part-time workers" (Broadbent, 2003).

Osawa (2001) elaborated that even wages for so-called "full-time part-timers" in Japan who spend more than 35 hours per week working are well below those of regular full-time workers. Furthermore, there exists a gap between female part-time and full-time wages, with female part-timers earning only 65.7% of female full-time wages. This has gradually worsened since 1990 when female part-timers earned 75% of female full-time wages (Shire, 2007).

Shire (2007) also shows that temporary agency work is also dominated by women, specially the most precarious form of *tōroku-gata* or *registered* temporary employment. But while temporary workers generally get higher rates compared to others, just like part-time workers, women in both categories get lower pay than men, and men benefit from better conditions than women. Thus, the gender hierarchy found in full-time employment is also replicated in temporary and part-time work.

Again, extending the analysis on "freeters", it seems that labour continuation towards becoming more flexible would nail the women "freeters" more firmly to "freeterhood" than men. The army of part-time labourers is in fact a female horde.

The gendered nature of the employment system in Japan is also reflected in the pension system. Shire (2007) echoes Broadbent's (2003) analysis that part-time work is assumed to be work by married women who depend or should depend on the male breadwinner. This is evident in Japan's "male breadwinner model" of pension system which provides "comparatively high contribution of male wages to total household income, and pension policies delivering the highest rate of benefits to full-time employees with dependent spouses". In actuality this model only exists for male employees of large companies (with life-time employment) and does not reflect the majority of women who are also regularly employed. In fact, Shire added, "dual earning couples outnumbered households with the 'model' male breadwinner/full-time housewife throughout the 1980s".

For the small number of women who were able to make it in fulltime employment, their condition is also worse off compared to men. Women are put in different tracks separate from that of men. In these separate tracks, women have fewer opportunities for promotion, because of the assumptions that they will leave their fulltime work by the time they marry and become full-time mothers. It is also believed that, should they desire the same privileges as male fulltime workers, they should exert more effort, which means longer hours and frequent transfers and foreign assignments. This, not

withstanding the fact that women are still the ones expected to take more responsibilities in the household and in care-giving.

It is assumed that women want part-time jobs only because of their primary responsibilities in the home. They are thought incapable of dedicating themselves fully to the companies. It is further assumed that since part-time work entails shorter hours, part-time work allows women to combine their primary domestic responsibilities and paid work. These assumptions are not true because part-time workers in fact, as I have discussed earlier, work similar number of hours to those full-time workers. Most of these women work in companies with low-paying jobs and they work longer hours, sometimes even longer than regular workers.

The resulting uneven distribution of job insecurity across genders confirms that the traditional ideologies of *ryosai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) and *otoko wa shigoto, onna wa katei* (men have jobs, women have households) persist in Japan's post-industrial society. Part-time employment in Japan can be seen as a corporate adaptation strategy to maintain the male "lifetime" employment system despite its high cost in the light of present economic conditions.

In other words, women's labour is exploited (work longer hours for less pay) to support the benefits of life-time employment enjoyed mostly by men.

## Conclusion

Ideally, as in many industrialised societies, part-time work should provide women with a choice to balance work and family. But it Japan, part-time work for women further marginalises their labour. Employers justify their hiring women as such because of their primary role in the household, thus giving lesser value to the work they perform outside. As Broadbent (2003) aptly puts it, "dressed in the guise of choice, part-time work is a compromise between governments and employers to utilise women's labour without disrupting the gender division of labour."

Japanese society justifies this gender division of labour, arguing that women are in fact the "bosses" when it comes to household management. But no matter how the society paints this gender division of labour, the reality shows that in this divide, women are at the losing end. The economic stagnation and the resulting adjustment to the employment system have only made this reality more obvious.

Women are being pulled in opposite directions by the competing expectations that companies and the state impose upon them. Companies and the state exploit women's cheap labour, and yet their expectation that women take primary responsibility for domestic household and child-rearing has not changed. They continue to hold women accountable for their failure to perform their reproductive function in the society.

The government's program of encouraging individual women to give birth, even if they give individual incentives to these women will only yield short-term results. Programs that merely give incentives to individual women are not systematic and comprehensive enough. Only an overhaul of the whole social and economic condition of women can result in long-term progress. This would entail providing genuine space for women to participate and be valued equally as men in the employment system as well as the change in the expectation for both men's and women's role in the household and care-giving. Only then can Japanese society become truly conducive for raising children and making families.

## References


Broadbent, K. (2003). *Women's employment in Japan: The experience of part-time workers*. London: Routledge.

Japan Times. (2007). *Yanagisawa calls women 'birth-giving machines'*, January 28, 2007.

Kyodo News. (2007). *Abe rebukes Yanagisawa over 'birth-giving machines' remark.* January 29, 2007.

Lunsing, W. (2003). Parasite and non-parasite singles: Japanese journalists and scholars taking positions (Review Essay). *Social Science Japan Journal,* 9(2).

Masahiro, Y. (1999). *Parasaito shinguru no sidai* (The age of parasite singles). Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho.

Ministry of Labour. (2007). *Annual report on the labour force survey* (released by Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication. online, as of July 2007: http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/roudou/154dt.htm

Nishi, K. (2006). *Current situation of parasite-singles in Japan* (Summary). Japan: Statistical Research and Training Institute.

Osawa, M. (2001). People in irregular modes of employment: Are they really not subject to discrimination? *Social Sciences Japan Journal, 4*(2), 183-199.

Shire, K. (2007). Gender dimensions of the aging workforce in Japan. In F. Coulmas (Ed.) *Challenges of Demographic Change in Japan*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers.

Statistics Bureau and Statistical Research and Training Institute, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, available online at http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/figures /index.htm#contents.

The Economist. (2001). *Poor little rich kids*. April 2001

Yuji, G. (2005). *A nagging sense of job insecurity: The new reality facing Japanese youth*. (Jean Connell Hoff, trans.) Tokyo: International House of Japan.

# Becoming a Mum: Conflict between the Ideal Mother and the Self

**Lisa M. Raith (raith@usq.edu.au)**
**Cath A. Rogers-Clark (rogerscl@usq.edu.au)**
Department of Nursing and Midwifery
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

This paper explores the dominant narratives present in in-depth ante- and post- natal interviews with 10 first-time mothers from south-east Queensland. Using a feminist post-structuralist paradigm, the idealised conceptions of motherhood adopted by these women are juxtaposed against their desires to maintain and regain an identity separate to their mothering one. Beliefs about what constitutes 'work' are also explored. These findings resonate with the tension between second-wave feminism's view of the institution of motherhood as a primary means of women's oppression, and later studies which attempted to validate women's experiences and work. Furthermore, these mothers' beliefs suggest that they are grappling with the integration of the often contradictory aspects of mothering into a workable whole. In some ways, repeating many of the struggles their own mothers faced. This hypothesis, along with current societal concerns with delayed mothering, picket-fence families, and a return to paid work for mothers of school-aged children, suggest that the influences upon mothers, to be all things to all people remains.

## Introduction

Despite significant societal changes over the last decade, "…decisions about whether, when and how to mother continue to face almost all women" (DiQuinzio, 1999, p. xi). Society in general and mothers in particular, are caught by the many contradictions of motherhood. Is mothering innate or a learned skill that has been used to oppress women? Is a full-time mother at home better than one who is in paid employ? Is it a private or public responsibility? Who is a 'good' mother?

These questions have engaged maternal scholars since the 1970s (Brown, Lumley, Small, & Astbury, 1994; Everingham, 1994; Ex & Janssens, 2000; Hays, 1996; Hrdy, 1999; Kitzinger, 1992; Le Blanc, 1999; McMahon, 1995; Miller, 2005; Oakley, 1992; Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991; Porter, 2006; Rich, 1995; Wearing, 1984; Yeo, 2005). More recent research has considered how the views of feminist and pro-natalist thinkers have informed dominant, cultural, mothering narratives, and the resultant identity and health difficulties this may pose for new mothers (Blumenthal, 1999; Carolan, 2004; Hays, 1996; Kitzinger, 1992; Lupton, 2000; Maushart, 2006; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1998; Thurer, 1994; Wall, 2001). Finally, researchers have investigated the more modern phenomena of lesbian, step, adoptive and IVF mothering, as well as childlessness (Cannold, 2005; Downe, 2004; Hewlett, 2002; Letherby, 1994)).

Australian National statistics at the beginning of this century fuelled public concern about a population that was ageing, delaying parenthood and having fewer children than ever before. However, the birth rate of 1.73 babies in 2001 rose to 1.81 in 2005 and as at 31st December 2006 births were the highest recorded since 1971. Additionally, mothers in 60% of all couple families with children under 15 years old, were in part- or full-time paid employment in 2002 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003a, 2003b, June, 2007, March 2003, November, 2002).

These data prompted governmental and public debate concerning the position of Australian families and the resultant family-focus of the Howard government[28] appears to have encouraged women to have babies. However, social commentator and feminist Anne Summers, suggests that hidden in the current debate is a subtle, but strong anti-woman rhetoric in which no-one talks about women, only about families. Equality has been replaced by a new ideology she calls "the breeding creed". She further suggests that the options offered to women will push them back into the home and full-time motherhood (Summers, 2003).

Against this background it is considered timely to examine the expectations and experiences of modern Australian women who are becoming mothers. How do modern women deal with conflicting ideologies and cultural mores when they become mothers? How does this impact on their health and well-being? If we consider that mothering has the greatest impact on children and, therefore, the future of our country, then the welfare of all Australian mothers is a fundamental concern.

## Aim, Methodology and Method

By listening to, interpreting and reporting women's stories of their journeys to early motherhood, I aimed to

[28] For example, paid maternity leave provisions (Sex Discrimination Unit, 2002), increased baby bonus, and the call by Treasurer Peter Costelllo to have "one for Dad, one for Mum and one for the country" (McKew, 2004)

investigate the beliefs, expectations, and experiences about motherhood held by modern Australian women. Additionally, I was keen to learn how they incorporated their new mothering role into their sense of self.

A feminist, post-structuralist approach was used for several reasons but mainly because it allowed for a multiplicity of stories and truths which are socially located, and, most importantly, demanded respect for the participants, and their stories, at all times. Therefore, I formed whole narratives from the ante- and post- natal interviews which are presented in my dissertation. Additionally, I used thematic analysis to find dominant themes or master narratives. It is part of this analysis that will be discussed in this paper.

Recruited using snowball techniques, the 10 women were all middle-class, trade or tertiary educated, lived in south-east Queensland in stable, heterosexual relationships and, bar one, had planned to have children. The median age was 30 years. They were all pregnant with their first child at the first interview, and that child was 8 to 9 months old for the second interview. Any names used are pseudonyms chosen by the mothers. All appropriate ethical clearances were obtained.

## Thematic Analysis

Four dominant themes, Conceptions of Ideal Mothering; Likely and Challenging Realities; Upholding the Self; and Life Progression/Personal Growth were found. This paper briefly discusses the themes, Conceptions of Ideal Mothering and Upholding the Self.

### Conceptions of Ideal Mothering

This was the first category of talk to catch my attention and multiple readings only strengthened that first impression of its dominance within the discourse. The premise underlying the mother ideal is the notion of the 'good mother' or, 'good mothering', which encompasses beliefs concerning attributes of good mothers as well as ideas about the correct way to parent. Views about what constituted ideal or good mothering (the mother they wanted to be, or felt they should be) were easily accessible for these women.

The beliefs clustered into three sub-themes; Instinctive, Wonderful Mothering; Exclusive Mothering; and Good Mother Attributes. Biological, instinctive mothering is the notion that mothering is innate, natural and the ultimate self-fulfilment for women. Exclusive mothering encompasses the child-centred nature of these participants' mothering. Lastly, good mother attributes comprises a list of mothering characteristics and behaviours that these mothers considered paramount.

**Instinctive, Wonderful Mothering** The notion of mothering as natural was a universal belief. Most felt all mothers/women possess these instincts and having a baby was something that millions of women did every day.

*And I think it just comes, it almost comes naturally. You just sort of, automatically, switch into this new mode.* *Meg, AN interview*

Although the realities of life with a new baby challenged this notion, several mothers still spoke post-natally about knowing instinctively what to do for their child. However, awareness of the ideal had led some, like Lucy, to challenge it.

*If it was all to do with mothering instincts, then you know, why would men make such good carers?*
*AN interview*

Nevertheless, a few felt that being a mother was the ultimate goal of womanhood, although some felt their lives had been complete before the baby.

*...having a little baby I think also, just emotional fulfilment, it's spiritual, it's physical fulfilment, it's everything.* *Jasmine, AN interview*

**Exclusive Mothering** Not only indicative of the life-fulfilment aspect of mothering, Jasmine's comment also suggested the notion of exclusive, monopolistic mothering that these mum's thought appropriate. Most talked about the child being the pivot about which all else revolves.

*And I don't think we're as selfish as we were, because you can't be when you've got children, I mean, they always come first. They do….I mean, and you're, I'm happy to do that….* *PN interview, Amy*

This was especially dominant post-natally in which the children, as one mother said, ran their life completely. They spoke of babies' moods controlling whether they went out or what they achieved for the day. For a few mums, monopolistic mothering was evident in terms of beliefs of being responsible for stimulating and developing their babies mentally. An important aspect of this exclusivity was trusting others, such as day care, grandparents and friends, with the baby. For example Liza talked of a friend's mother's offer to baby sit so she and her husband could go out for dinner

*And I thought, oh that would be great, but then I have to think, oh she's never looked after her before.*
*PN interview*

**Good Mother Attributes** Like much other research, these mothers felt a good mother needed to be nurturing, calm, patient, capable, and all-knowing.

*I think I might be a strict mother…I don't want to be a pushover…I want to be the sort of Mum that they'll respect me and they can approach me…that I'm there for the child…you know, mother's role in just keeping*

*them safe…and having fun with them as well and not being a stick in the mud* *AN interview, Heidi*

The potency of the mother ideal was especially evident in the way *all* the mothers reverted to culturally appropriate mothering talk (See underlining below) after making negative or self-focused comments.

*I've never had, had to worry about leaving him but sometimes I wish I could just go. But then I'm only gone for 10 minutes and I'll be like, 'oh I hope he's okay'*

*PN interview, Jenny*

Even though many felt it was important for them to have time away from their baby, for most of the mothers, talking or thinking about their own needs was fraught with guilt and difficulty.

## Upholding the Self

Juxtaposed against the ideal mother discourse was a subtle, but significant theme which focussed on these mothers' strong desire to maintain or regain time for their independent selves.

The talk in this section clustered into two main sub-themes: Individual Focus and The Partner. Individual Focus concerned the centrality of the individual in terms of career and private needs. The Partner encompassed wishes for shared parenting and housework, as well as maintenance of the couple relationship.

**Individual Focus** A self-identity separate from that as mother was central to this theme. Ante-natally, most were confident that despite some compromises, they would still be able to pursue their own interests and find self time. These ideas had changed post-natally to a growing realisation amongst the mothers that they had somewhat lost themselves in their babies' needs. For some the challenge to their sense of self and agency had been substantial.

*There have been bad days where I've thought, and it's not been, it's not been because she's been a hard baby to look after. It's just been the lack of freedom for me where I've thought, 'God, if I knew now, if I knew then what I know now, would we have made the same choice?'* *Lucy, PN interview*

An interesting adjunct was the notion that having time for the self, especially for leisure, was selfish. Heidi's comment about not wanting to have another baby just yet was revealing,

*Because, I, um, I've got to get my body back into shape… and, um, get back into my healthy stuff that I used to be in. Um, yeah, and just try and, um, to be a bit selfish in the sense that I've just got to look after myself for a few months* *PN interview*

Several participants cited their paid work or career as a significant aspect of their selves as separate from being a mother. Apart for financial needs, paid work was seen as providing rewards such as social stimulation, competence, and recognition. Moreover, post-natally, paid work was seen as enjoyable and providing freedom from the demands of the baby. Additionally, for most of the participants, return to paid work was a way of regaining a part of who they were before they became mothers. Aphrodite captured this sentiment when she said

*But it's nice to just drive to work…And you get there and you just get out and shut the door and you don't unclip, and come on in, and gather thirty thousand things. So it's probably reminiscent of what life was like before Alex* *PN interview*

Many of the mothers had to adjust to the bodily changes pregnancy and birth had wrought. Illness and injury, temporary or lasting alterations to size and shape, and difficulties incorporating breast feeding were spoken of by most of the mothers. Sarah talked about the anger she had felt trying to breast feed while managing a life.

*So I just sort of had enough. It was too hard umm for my lifestyle….trying to run a business and leaving her with other people and I was constantly feeding, expressing and um I had the most ridiculous mammaries - they were just so big!* *PN interview*

**The Partner** The sharing of child- and house-work, as well as maintenance of couple identities was also seen as a way of protecting the mothers' personal selves. However, feminist expectations of chore sharing were not realised post-natally, something which all the mums commented on. As well, couple time had become family time due to the pragmatics of life with a new baby.

*So, but no, there's been no couple time. It's just been more family time….I mean when Justin goes to bed we spend a bit of time together…We really haven't gone out on dates…* *Alison, PN interview*

## Concept of Work

A final point needs to be highlighted. A covert but vital element of the mothering discourse was the nature of talk about 'work' and was inextricably linked to the themes above. On the one hand the terms 'mothering' and 'work' were viewed as being independent and unrelated. As Meg said post-natally

*James gets up as much as I do at night and does as much as he can considering that he works all week…*

implying that her motherwork was not as legitimate as her husband's paid employment. On the other hand, mothering was *hard* work and vital to self-esteem.

*Before I had her there's no way I would say, 'a mother's working'…when people ask me, oh would you go back to work, [I say] 'yeah I'm a mother. I work.*

*Liza, PN interview*

## Discussion

Conceptions of Ideal Mothering and Upholding the Self are two salient and important aspects of new motherhood for these women and reveal how they (a) conceptualised motherhood and mothering in the modern world, and (b) conceptualised their own identities as mothers within that world. The dominance of the themes suggests that these are key facets of two aspects of these mothers' emergent maternal identity (Blumenthal, 1999), Ideal Mother and Independent Self. Additionally, thoughts about what constituted work were related to the tension between these themes/selves.

**Ideal Mother** The view of the ideal mother (devoted, nurturing, instinctive, responsible, selfless, baking, stay-at-home, maybe sacrificial, fulfilled and happy) is long-enduring and easily accessible in our western society (Brown et al., 1994; Carolan, 2004; Kitzinger, 1992; Le Blanc, 1999; McMahon, 1995; Phoenix et al., 1991; Rich, 1995; Wearing, 1984)**.**

It is not surprising, given the western master narrative (Miller, 2005) or myth, of the ideal mother is compelling and has become so culturally entrenched that it is seen as a statement of fact (Barthes, 1993) rather than an evolutionary, historical construction (Hrdy, 1999; Rich, 1995; Thurer, 1994; Yeo, 2005). The data in my study confirm the continued and robust influence of this model. It was the foremost mother-identity drawn upon, and was still evident even when faced with the realities of early mothering experiences.

The salience of archetypical maternality had a profound effect on how these women thought about themselves as mothers. Able to birth successfully, love and care for their babies, and to 'just know' what the baby needed, was reassuringly familiar and enabled the women to feel confidence and profound joy in their baby and new life. However, this same ideal caused feelings of guilt and inadequacy when expectations were not validated or unanticipated consequences occurred. Breast-feeding difficulties and the constancy of a new baby's needs caused self-doubt, frustration and sadness. For most these difficulties and lack of self-time led to a wish for a regaining of their pre-baby identity.

**Upholding the Self** Exhortations to find one's self, to be an individual are part of our modern cultural narrative of individualism (DiQuinzio, 1999). Although temporary challenges to the sense of self were anticipated by the women in terms of loss of time and an interrupted career, they were unprepared for the obligatory sense of exclusive responsibility and the demands of living up to an ideal. They spoke intensely about feeling a loss of self and, additionally, expressed guilt and apology about their need for self-time. Seen as paradoxical to the Ideal Mother identity, they were struggling to reconcile the perceived conflicting demands of these two selves, even if they could rationalise focus on the self as being good for the family/baby. Extending also to the career domain, the competition between the Ideal and the Self reflects the argument about public and private responsibility for child-rearing as well as what constitutes 'work'.

Although cognisant that their mothering was work (and often hard at that), the word 'work' was generally used to refer to the domain of paid work outside the home. The unconscious implication appeared to be that paid work was more important and legitimate than their child-rearing endeavours. This outlook is a significant factor in the dissonance which underpins the conflict between the different mother-selves as well as the tensions between the home and the world of paid work.

**Closing Thoughts** Becoming a mother (or not) remains a key aspect of the development of western women's adult identities (Rich, 1995). The birth of a child, especially the first, is a time of significant transition, in which women need to face themselves and their many identities and try to reconcile them with the emerging mother self. Contradictory selves compete for time and space causing feelings of chaos and self-doubt. Furthermore, these identities are fluid and changing depending on context and salience for each person.

Although all these mothers, bar one, had always imagined having children, they still found the reality different, chaotic and confronting. Incredibly, and notwithstanding major social changes, the principal reference for mothering these mothers were using was the 1950's ideal that has been spoken of since maternal research began in the 1970s, even though they did challenge some beliefs. Additionally, they embraced the 20$^{th}$ century's ethic of individualism. This research highlights that not only are women repeating many of their own mothers' struggles, they must also integrate newer, often contradictory ideals into a workable mothering whole.

My concern is that despite a broader range of potential mothering contexts, things are not easier, but more complicated. Despite this, and 30-odd years of maternal research, why do the traditional ideals of motherhood still dominate? Where are the modern images? Why do we hold simplistic concepts of motherhood rather than appreciating and understanding a complex, holistic model?

## Acknowledgments

I gratefully acknowledge the Australian Postgraduate Award which predominately funded this research.

## References


Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003a). *Age of women giving birth now older than ever* (No. Cat. No. 3301.0). Canberra: ABS.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003b). *Australian social trends: Family and community - family functioning: Balancing family and work.* Canberra: ABS.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (June, 2007). *3101.0 - Australian demographic statistics, Dec 2006*. Canberra: ABS.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (March 2003). *3201.0 Population by age and sex, Australian States and Territories.* Canberra: ABS.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (November, 2002). *3301.0 - Births, Australia*. Canberra: ABS.

Barthes, R. (1993). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). London: Vintage.

Blumenthal, D. (1999). Representing the divided self. *Qualitative Inquiry, 5*(3), 377-392.

Brown, S., Lumley, J., Small, R., & Astbury, J. (1994). *Missing voices: The experience of motherhood*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Cannold, L. (2005). *What, no baby? Why women are losing the freedom to mother, and how they can get it back.* Freemantle: Curtin University Books.

Carolan, M. (2004). Women's narratives of early mothering: Getting past the right story. *Birth Issues, 13*(2), 51-56.

DiQuinzio, P. (1999). *The impossibility of motherhood: feminism, individualism, and the problem of mothering.* New York: Routledge.

Downe, P. J. (2004). Stepping on maternal ground: Reflections on becoming an 'Other-Mother'. In A. O'Reilly (Ed.), *Mother matters: Motherhood as discourse and practice* (pp. 165-178). Toronto: Association for Research on Mothering.

Everingham, C. (1994). *Motherhood and modernity: An investigation into the rational dimension of mothering.* St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin.

Ex, C. T. G. M., & Janssens, J. M. A. M. (2000). Young females images of motherhood. *Sex Roles, 43*(11/12), 865-890.

Hays, S. (1996). *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. New Haven: Yale Press.

Hewlett, S. A. (2002). *Baby hunger: The new battle for motherhood*. London: Atlantic Books.

Hrdy, S. B. (1999). *Mother nature: A history of mothers, infants, and natural selection* (1st ed.). New York: Pantheon Books.

Kitzinger, S. (1992). *Ourselves as mothers*. London: Bantam Books.

Le Blanc, W. (1999). *Naked motherhood: Shattering illusions and sharing truths*. Sydney: Random House.

Letherby, G. (1994). Mother or not, mother or what? Problems of definition and identity. *Women's Studies International Forum, 17*(5), 525-532.

Lupton, D. (2000). 'A love/hate relationship': The ideals and experiences of first-time mothers. *Journal of Sociology, 36*(1), 50-63.

Maushart, S. (2006). *The mask of motherhood: How mothering changes everything and why we pretend it doesn't.* Sydney: Vintage.

Mauthner, M., & Doucet, A. (1998). Reflections on a voice-centred relational method: Analysing maternal and domestic voices. In J. Ribbens & R. Edwards (Eds.), *Feminist dilemmas in qualitative research : public knowledge and private lives* (pp. 119-146). London: Sage Publications Ltd.

McKew, M. (2004). *Economy will nurture population growth: Costello*. Retrieved 01/08/2007, 2007, from http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2004/s1261874.htm

McMahon, M. (1995). *Engendering motherhood: Identity and self-transformation in women's lives*. New York: Guilford Press.

Miller, T. (2005). *Making sense of motherhood: A narrative approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nicolson, P. (1998). *Post-natal depression : psychology, science, and the transition to motherhood.* London ; New York: Routledge.

Oakley, A. (1992). *Social support and motherhood: The natural history of a research project*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Phoenix, A., Woollett, A., & Lloyd, E. (Eds.). (1991). *Motherhood: Meanings, practices, and ideologies*. London: Sage.

Porter, M. (2006). *Transformative power in motherwork: A study of mothering in the 1950s and 1960s.* Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University Of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia.

Rich, A. (1995). *Of woman born: Motherhood as experience and institution* (Norton paperback ed.). New York: Norton.

Sex Discrimination Unit. (2002). V*aluing parenthood: options for paid maternity leave*. Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Summers, A. (2003). *The end of equality*. Sydney: Random House.

Thurer, S. (1994). The myths of motherhood: How culture reinvents the good mother. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Wall, G. (2001). Moral constructions of motherhood in breastfeeding discourse. *Gender and Society, 15*(4), 592-610.

Wearing, B. (1984). The ideology of motherhood: A study of Sydney suburban mothers. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Yeo, E. J. (2005). Constructing and contesting motherhood. 1750-1950. *Hecate, 31*(2), 4-20.

# Integrating Islamic Values in Domestic Violence Mitigation

**Shamim Samani (S.Samani@murdoch.edu.au)**
**Dora Marinova (D.Marinova@murdoch.edu.au)**
Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy
Murdoch University, Murdoch WA 6150 Australia

**Abstract**

The discourse of secularisation is predicated on the idea of the separation of the state from the church. This decoupling of the secular from the religious in the public domain, fails to allow society to benefit from the dynamics of belief systems and faith-based action, and consequently their role in strengthening communities. The paper makes a case for the inclusion of community based programs and value-integration methods as part of the wider social policy initiatives to help alleviate the problem of domestic violence in the Muslim community, in Perth, Western Australia.

## Introduction

Domestic violence continues to pose a serious threat to the well-being of women. A persistent global phenomenon, it is endemic across boundaries of class, culture, education, religion, ethnicity and age. International statistics reveal an estimated one in three women victims beaten, coerced into sex or abused in other ways (WCDFVS, 2006). Statistics for Australia show similar levels of incidence with 33% of women experiencing physical and 19% sexual violence since the age of 15 (Phillips, 2006). An important significance of violence perpetration against women is the denial of human rights. Recognition of this is affirmed in human rights instruments such as the 1992 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which brought the issue of domestic violence, a matter that had remained largely a private affair to be resolved within individual households, into the fold of international human rights, calling for prevention policies.

As rhetorical discourse, these objectives promote a universal principle in gender equality that comes from a secular approach to human rights – an approach that assumes homogeneity in perceptions of equality, that asserts the need for normalising gender relations by alignment with it. Where cultural values are sanctioned as religious perceptives, the application of such measures becomes challenging; where codified in spiritual directives, attitudinal changes regarding gender relations must be understood in the framework of the underlying faith and cultural codes that define the gender roles, and effective solutions should be sourced from within the underpinning theosophical framework.

As Australian society has become more diverse with a varied migrant profile, the available domestic violence mitigation services largely based on criminal justice penalties are proving limited in addressing the needs of specific groups. A key theme emerging from current research on domestic violence is the need to engage community groups in addressing the problems taking into consideration the specificities of their faith and cultural orientation (DCD, 2006). Studies show some general challenges shared by those affected, in particular culturally oriented ones, including a lack of awareness of what constitutes domestic violence (Hussain, 2001) and difficulties in accessing available services. As a predominant force in shaping conduct, values, traditions and customs, culture can play a significant role in policy application. A more holistic approach that considers cultural specifics with several stakeholders including key community members and leaders, mainstream organisations and the criminal justice system is often suggested. Culturally suitable services may more likely be accessed by users to seek help. Based on empirical evidence from a Master's thesis, this paper highlights the need for faith and culture-specific solutions to domestic violence for the Western Australian Muslim community.

Even though ample data on the incidence of domestic violence within the general Australian community exists, there is no breakdown of ethnic or faith incidence. It is likely that many cases of abuse go unchallenged and unreported given the sensitive nature of the matter, the particular circumstances of individual victims, as well as other culturally related reasons. As is the case with other societies, the incidence of violence in the Muslim community can be attributed to deep-rooted social and economic problems such as unemployment, cultural conflicts, alcohol or drug abuse, and is deeply grounded in unequal power relations within the family structure. The focus on gender relations in this context is based on the importance of the family in Islam and sourcing solutions from its value system. The approach taken is analytical, probing the interpretations of Islamic tenets that could lead to the creation of unequal power structures within families and an abuse of authority in what Islam considers the bedrock of society – the family unit. The study does not suggest that Muslim women are exceptionally vulnerable to domestic violence as compared to other groups; rather its purpose is to stress the social structures that need examining if attitudinal changes in gender relations are to be effected

and solutions to the problem tracked from within the system rather than imposed from the outside.

## Gender Equality in Islam

Islam, a combination of law, religion and morality (Dahl, 1997), provides a comprehensive framework for the individual, family and community roles for its followers. As a model system the Shariah is considered unvarying and universal, in that it is applicable to Muslims wherever they live, however in reality it is not. Local traditions and culture have adapted the doctrine and adjusted it to their customs and conditions (Hussain, 2001).

Contemporary Muslim feminists and many western writers observing the seclusion and subjugated position of women in Muslim households are skeptical about the initial aims of the Qur'an to elevate the status of women. Although the original direction of the scriptures may have been to lift the status of women, the social conditions supporting patriarchal structures and male leadership have been disinclined to raise women's position. As Islamic society changed during the course of its history, the interpretations of the Qur'an were supported by adaptations to the later realities that excluded women from the public sphere resulting from such readings. Barlas (2004) affirms the influence of history and tradition in patriarchal readings of the Qur'an and is critical of the reliance on the limited indications of the superior status of men as compared to women. She writes: "Indeed, Muslims read three or four words in the Qur'an to mean that God has made men ontologically superior to women…"

In the ideal as structured by Islamic norms that are derived from Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Prophet, the status of women is equal to men. There are several verses from the Qur'an and Ahadith that convey the principle of universal equality, for example: *"All people are equal, as equal as the teeth of a comb. There is no claim of merit of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of a white over a black person, or of a male over a female. Only God-fearing people merit a preference with God"* (Chapter 3; verse 195). This quote conveys the equality of the sexes, removing division along racial, colour and class ranking; the right to reward is categorically reserved on the basis of piety. However the lived realities are far from such ideals.

## Interpreting Women's Rights

There are differences in scholarly opinion and authorised understandings regarding verses on women's rights in a marriage. One of the most controversial verses used both, by critics of the religion to construe its despotism, and by egoistic Muslim males to give physical chastisement of women a divine endorsement, suggests male domination and women's inferior position in comparison to men. The verse is seen and alluded to as an attestation of the divine authorisation of the physical chastisement of wives: "*Men are the managers of the affairs (qawwamun) of women because Allah has made the one superior (fadala) to the other and because men spend of their wealth on women. Virtuous women are, therefore, obedient (qanitat); they guard their rights carefully in their absence under the care and watch of Allah. As for those women whose defiance you have cause to fear, admonish them and keep them apart from your beds and beat them…*" (Chapter 4; verse 34).

According to Engineer (1999), who refers to early Islamic commentators, one of the key words in the verse "*qawwam*" has been rendered differently by the various scholars. The word can be translated as "*one who takes full care of women*" and is seen by some as meaning a "ruler" – that men are "rulers over women". This duty of guardianship is further translated as giving men the superior position of decision-making within the household and provides the basis for establishing a hierarchy within the marital relationship. However, this superior position cannot stand on its own and is to be seen as an extension of the duty of the maintenance and protection aspects within the relationship.

Shafaat (1984), comprehends the term "*qawwam*" as meaning "*something or someone who is a guard, maintainer or caretaker in a proper and fair manner*" and sees two reasons for men being given this role; one that men have the physical ability to protect women and second that men spend out of their wealth (due to the duty of economic responsibility). According to her, the role of protection goes beyond economic and physical protection extending to the psychological and emotional needs of women. Whereas patriarchal readings interpret the term *"fadala*" (preference/favour) in the verse accorded to men, as superiority over women, more liberal commentators do not see a specification as to who the favoured ones are (Shafaat, 1984). The complementary role of women in this verse is "*qanitat*" translated as obedient (Engineer, 1999) or "*one who is devoted to someone and out of love and devotion obeys him or her*" (Shafaat, 1984). In return for the support and protection, the Qur'an ordains obedience on the part of women, but here again there is a difference of opinion as to obedient to whom. Patriarchal readings render it as obedience to husbands, whereas other commentators as obedience to God. In the ideal, in reciprocation for the support from husbands, wives are instructed to have regard for the wishes of and decisions taken by husbands to ensure domestic harmony. The various duties and obligations are meant to harmonise and ennoble the relationship with spiritual values reinforcing family ties.

The view that it is the duty of a woman to concede to her husband's authority remains a key contested issue

between the traditional readers and the more egalitarian scholarship of Islamic texts who find it contrary to ideas of gender equality endorsed in verses that articulate equality of the sexes. Current Muslim feminist scholarship offers readings that challenge the patriarchal interpretations of the verse as male superiority over females (see Barlas, 2004). However if adhered to, an authorised duty to concede to male authority limits the autonomy of the woman, sanctioning a man's regulation and restriction of her options and movements, making violence if perpetrated, extremely difficult to disclose or effect intervention. In case of "deviant" behaviour on part of the woman, discipline can be understood as a right of the husband, and depending on the jurisprudential traditions held on to, can provide male authority impunity in the perpetration of violence.

## The Empirical Evidence

Empirical evidence for the study was collected in 2003 through a questionnaire survey and three interview based case studies. They are the basis for the recommendations for an integrated faith-based approach to mitigation.

The questionnaire survey was designed not only to determine whether domestic violence occurs within the community, but also to ascertain the attitudes and potential responses to violence**.** It did not aim to find a quantitative measure, i.e. the number of incidences, but focused on the awareness of its existence and what measures are preferred as responses and deterrents. The research instrument was a questionnaire distributed in the community to establish existence of violence, potential responses to it and the awareness of support systems available to victims. A sample of 27 adult Muslim female participants from different ethnic background was recruited in Perth to voluntarily participate. The results indicate that nearly 58% of the participants were sure that physical abuse exists in the community, while a smaller number (50%) disclosed certainty of emotional abuse.

Although the research showed that most women when exposed to violence in the home would find it threatening enough to their safety and well-being to seek some form of aid, it also revealed the reluctance to seek help and support, pointing to impediments to disclosure and assistance-seeking. This disinclination can among other barriers, be related to the sources available for help. Those who feel that the agents and agencies that are called for help may be ineffective or incapable of giving useful assistance will be unwilling to seek any form of assistance. The findings indicated that those potentially exposed to violence would prefer to find recourse within the community rather than to seek aid outside it. A large number chose assistance from friends and relatives and a fair number indicated religious leaders as a source of help. No mainstream social agencies were indicated as a preference. This may be due to the inappropriateness of some services, e.g. a lack of empathy to the particular needs of Muslim women victims. There was also an indication of reluctance to involve the police.

The study also managed to highlight some of the causal factors of violent behaviour against women by men, indicating areas that need to be focused on in alleviation strategies. The findings pointed to economic and social factors such as employment and socialisation processes as possible variables in violence causation and possible solutions lie in investigating these issues further to develop approaches to reduce the problem.

Three interviews were the basis for the case studies that were carried out in the hope of providing the experiential data for domestic violence incidence. The women (no longer in violent relationships) were approached through contacts in welfare work agencies. There was a strong theme of controlling behaviour in all cases. The need to dominate and manipulate the conduct of the partner's affairs was not just limited to financial matters but extended to for example, what the person wore or "*which foot to put forward first when walking*"! All women had no access to money even though it was coming into joint accounts. There was a restriction of movement (without being accompanied by a husband or family members) and interaction with outsiders. The forced isolation impacted on the self-esteem of the women who were unsure whether they would be believed; attempts at disclosure were further restrained by the fear of increased violence.

All three cases displayed undertones of strong patriarchal family structures where deference to the husband was an obligatory part of the woman's duties. This is a strong barrier to exposure in a violent relationship and was clearly exploited. In all cases, lies were used to obtain the trust of the women, but there was no remorse when being found out, and in fact there was an expectation of forgiveness because of the higher male ranking in the family order. None of the men showed an inclination to carry out their Islamic marital obligations as "supporters and protectors" or displayed the fair treatment as enjoined in religious directives.

Several barriers to disclosure and leaving were apparent in the accounts of the women interviewed, including economic dependency, the "shame" of exposing the family situation and largely the fear of losing children. All money matters were controlled by the husband or in one by the in-laws. Permission had to be sought to make any independent purchases and supposed "religious verdicts" were used to validate this control. All the three women feared losing their children – the psychological impact of which impacts highly on a woman's decision to leave a relationship.

Not having adequate knowledge about their rights under Australian law prevented the women from seeking help. "Shame" as an impediment to disclosing violence, ran high in the cases even when tragic consequences of the violence perpetrated through burning the victim had ensued. There was also a thread of conflict between religious practices and legal avenues open to women to escape violence in the home, very strongly displayed in a situation where despite having adequate knowledge about where to seek help and what legal options are available, access was curtailed by the belief that intervention should only be through Islamic sources. A constant reminder as one victim narrated, that "*it is wrong for Muslims to seek intervention outside and to involve the non-Muslim system in conflict resolution*" contains the violence within the family and community realm and eliminates the possibility of criminalising violent offenses.

## Value-integration in Violence Alleviation

Implicit in the empirical analysis in this paper is the search for information that can be used to prevent and resolve domestic violence. Solutions to the problem can be divided into two, i.e. prevention and intervention. Given the importance of the family as a social organisation in Islam and the significance of religious directives, these need to be included in prevention and effective intervention in domestic violence. A value-integrated approach to mitigation by incorporating the faith specifics of Islam is thus needed.

Settling and adapting to the Australian lifestyle require significant changes in the approach to issues such as the rights of women, adjustment to a new socio-cultural and economic life and intergenerational concerns. The process of adaptation can be stressful to family relationships. With state support along with free education for males and females in Australia, there are likely to be shifts in expected and designated gender roles within the household. Where cultural expectations are not realised, conflicts can arise. One of the reasons that some migrant women are forcefully isolated and prevented from interacting with others is the fear that they may become "too free" and independent. Religious and community leaders must realise and work on these problems.

As there is less awareness of domestic violence in its different forms in many migrant communities, the general perception that disclosure of private family issues is shameful may keep incidents of violence under wraps. Its existence must be acknowledged for any positive steps to be taken against it. The sermons at the Friday congregational prayer meetings and public lectures on Islam are an ideal forum to create awareness of family values and condemnation of violence. Through education of the obligations, and their duty to God, men and women can be taught to respect their marital duties. Information on domestic violence issues containing clarification of Qur'anic verses that some men may use as a license for wife maltreatment need to be compiled and disseminated within the community as a preventive strategy. This should include the interpretation of these verses by well-known jurists. The extent of any disciplinary measures should be clearly stated with consensus from the Muslim clergy, so that there are no excuses or the possibility of excesses, as can be the case where people are left to interpret verses on their own. Knowledge about the rights of women, both under Islamic and Australian law should be an essential component of such strategies.

There is a need for counsellors and social workers that are well-versed in Islamic jurisprudence to enable them to work with Muslim clients in accordance with the Shariah. Many Muslim women are reluctant to access domestic violence support agencies because they lack the specialist services these women would prefer. Also since much referral is done to mainstream agencies, service providers need to be acquainted with the particularities of the Islamic faith and consequently the needs of Muslim victims. Muslim social work agencies need to network and liaise with mainstream organisations to devise strategies that enable Muslim clients to access required services. Most victims who require shelter are referred to accommodation that is incompatible with their needs. Personnel at shelters and refuges need to be sensitised as to the particular needs of Muslim domestic violence victims (e.g. food, places for worship). A suitable alternative to mainstream crisis accommodation would be temporary shelters established within Muslim households.

In Islam, the arbitration process is an important step in conflict resolution in marital problems. One of the requirements of the process is the appointment of arbiters from both sides, and preferably from both families in the best interest of both parties. In the absence of extended family, clear indications have to be put forth about these appointments. If unrelated male representatives are chosen to stand for the woman, knowing her perspective is important and needs to be facilitated in accordance with Shariah requirements. The Muslim clergy is in a position to bring about this reform in mediation and should work on establishing guidelines for a fair and just outcome for both parties. The community needs to work together with mainstream social agencies to establish and provide appropriate services with counsellors conversant in Islamic guidelines who are able to advise within the Shariah and Australian legal frameworks.

## Conclusion

Gender relations are a strong correlate of violence perpetration. The cultural system of a clear dichotomy, with women as primary care-givers and men as household heads, in gender roles within Islamic society, can be detrimental to the well-being of women. Deeply rooted customary practices that are a result of evolved traditions having no basis in religious orders are often used as justification to deny women's rights. This paper has put forth the integration of cultural means within mainstream strategies for addressing the issue. As with people who move across national borders to make their homes in different lands, the Muslim communities of Australia face the difficulties of restructuring families and constructing new social boundaries. The importance of faith, family and community is a major challenge in a secular society where values, beliefs and practices of religion are seen as conflicting with western public life (Humphrey, 2001). Many social issues that are at the heart of the adaptation and integration process of this group (e.g. family dynamics) remain largely unaddressed.

The traditional gendered roles that shape the life of Muslim women are constantly changing and need to be dealt with to effect a comfortable change to life in the new western environment. Economic pressures often necessitate women's work outside the home and challenge the traditional role of men, as do state provided privileges (e.g. education and social security for women). At the same time, deep-rooted patriarchal traditions and the gender relations defined by them create a setting of inflexibility that hinders those who challenge the status quo. The strain on familial ties is huge with conflicting interests that try to adapt to the changing times, and maintain the traditional controlling position, creating a setting for violence perpetration.

Lifestyle practices according to the directives contained in religious scriptures are an integral and important part of daily living in Muslim households. Incorporating faith-ideals in establishing the illegitimacy of violence in the home is thus vital in alleviation strategies that are culturally specific for the Muslim community. Faith-based alternatives can make essential contributions to the work of social justice.

## References


Barlas, A. (2004). Towards a theory of gender equality in Muslim societies, http://www.asmabarlas.com/TALKS/20040529_CSID.pdf (accessed 2.08.2007).

Dahl, T.S. (1997). *The Muslim family*. Boston: Scandinavian University Press.

Department for Community Development, WA (DCD). (2006). *A review of literature relating to family and domestic violence in culturally and linguistically diverse communities of Australia*. Perth.

Engineer, A. A. (1999). *The Quran, women and modern society*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.

Humphrey, M. (2001). An Australian Islam? In A. Saeed & S. Akbarzadeh (Eds.), *Muslim communities in Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press.

Hussain, J. (2001). Family law and Muslim communities. In A. Saeed & S. Akbarzadeh (Eds), *Muslim communities in Australia*. Sydney: UNSW Press.

Shafaat, A. (1984). A commentary on the Qur'an 4:34. http://www.themodernreligion.com/women/w_dv.htm (accessed 12.12.2002).

Phillips, J. (2006). Measuring domestic violence and sexual assault against women, http://www.aph.gov.au/library/INTGUIDE/SP/ViolenceAgainstWomen.htm (accessed 3.08.2007).

Women's Council for Domestic & Family Violence Services, WA (WCDFVS). (2006). *Fact sheet*. Perth.

# A Consideration of the "Habitus" in Domestic Violence: Referring to the Theory of Pierre Bourdieu

**Reiko Shinomiya (reshn@ir.nihon-u.ac.jp)**
Department of Commerce and Economics, Junior College,
Nihon University, Mishima 411-8555, Japan

**Abstract**

This paper includes a discussion of the idea of patriarchy in Social Culture Theory and analyses the following points referring to the Theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1988). 1. Batterers commit domestic violence (DV) as a habitual behaviour on the basis of the idea of patriarchy and DV becomes internalised and institutionalised as a habitus. 2. Battered wives who have once left batterers often return to them, symbolically cooperating with the batterer and maintaining the DV habitus.

## Introduction

There are different factors that cause DV, which may be explained by such typical theories as Individual Theory, Social Interaction Theory (Kaino, 2002), Social Culture Theory and Attachment Theory (Wiehe, 1998). It has been clarified that abusers basically possess the idea of patriarchy (Bancroft & Silverman, 2004; Dutton & Golant, 2001; Nakamura, 1999). In this paper, I will discuss the idea of patriarchy in Social Culture Theory and analyse the following points, referring to the theory of Pierre Bourdieu (1988). 1. Batterers commit DV as a habitual behaviour on the basis of the above-mentioned idea. After the process becomes a habit, particularly in the case in which a partner has been maintained for a long time, DV becomes internalised and institutionalised as a habitus. 2. Battered wives who have once left batterers often return to them. These behaviours may express symbolically that they cooperate with the batterer and maintain the DV habitus. How difficult it is for them to escape from the DV family structured as an "illusion"? That will be the issue. In this regard and based on three DV precedents in Japan, Bourdieu's theory will be used to analyse the actions of the batterers and the victims from both their points of view. In order to lead to a conclusion in consideration of the common aspects of the three precedents, the three precedents will be given in the first half of the paper.

## The Precedents

**Case 1 – The Case of an Adjustment in the Marital Relationship** (Komine et al., 2003).

**The Family Situation** At the time DV occurred: Wife, husband, and two children. Present Situation: The wife (30 years old) lives with her parents and her two children, ages 5 and 3, and is a graduate student who works as a part-time high school teacher. The husband (34 years old) lives alone and manages an office and a translation business.

**Background of the Dispute** The Wife's Assertion: The relationship with the husband was similar to a "religious leader and follower." She was made to believe only what was told to her by her husband, and any outside information was shut out. She had worried about her own personality and the relationship with her father, and developed the kind of relationship with her husband where he was entrusted with everything. When she did not obey her husband, she was told to "Show your obedience through your actions," and as instructed by her husband, she shaved her head bald. This ended up in a fiasco involving the police. Since then, the wife and husband have been separated.

The Husband's Assertion: They got married but the wife did not keep her promise, and so they were divorced three months later. But his wife did not want to go back to her parents' home and said she wanted to stay with him so they continued to live together, and then after a year, they remarried. In regard to the wife shaving her head, his wife decided that she was not remorseful enough so she thought of this on her own.

**Summary of the Circumstances and Progress on Arbitration** The wife petitioned the Family Court for divorce arbitration, and the husband agreed to divorce, but neither party was willing to conciliate in regard to their parental rights, so the situation ended in a stalemate. Thereafter, the wife filed a suit in the district court. However she received advice to discuss the competency of parental rights, and it went into arbitration. After that, the parties agreed on divorce and there was an "Article 21 Judgment" where it was decided that the mother would have parental rights.

**Case 2 – The Divorce Petition Incident** (Tokyo District Court, 1998).

**The Family Situation** At the time DV occurred: Wife, husband and one child. Current Situation: The wife (32 years old) lives with her five-year-old daughter in the wife's parents' home. The husband (36 years old) is a company employee. (There are no other annotations.)

**Summary of the Circumstances and Progress on Arbitration Summary** The wife and husband met and married through their workplace. If there was something the husband was unhappy about, he had the type of personality that would, without discrimination, become suddenly enraged. While he was on transfer

and working as an employee overseas, there were some words or actions that he did not like, and he acted violently toward his wife by dragging her off her chair and onto the floor, and hitting her across the face several times. He brought out a kitchen knife, and the wife, fearing danger, took refuge in her nearby sister-in-law's house. Fearing further violence, the wife went back to her parents' home. Per Civil Code Article 770 Paragraph 1 No. 5, the husband petitioned for divorce and for his daughter's custody. But the wife, to this day does not want to abandon their marriage, and does not have the determination to go through with the divorce. Up to the time of the separation, the couple's marital relationship was quite insecure, with the husband, not considering himself emotionally as a spouse, and was not able to restrain his emotions. The court considered that if in the future, the husband would change his attitude and proactively make an effort to reconcile with his wife, then there was a possibility of reconciliation. For that reason, the husband's petition for divorce was dismissed.

**Case 3 – The Case of Accomplice to a Bodily Injury Resulting in Death** (Sapporo High Court, 2000).

**The Family Situation** At the time DV occurred: Wife, husband, and three children (a 4 year old son and a 3 year old son fathered by a previous husband, and an infant daughter fathered by the present husband). Current situation: The wife was protecting the husband when arrested, but after he was detained and released, she worked in food service, and the children were placed in a facility. There are plans for her children to rejoin her. The husband is serving a sentence for bodily injury resulting in death to the younger son. He has previous convictions for repeated offences.

**Summary of the Circumstances** The wife brought her two children from a previous marriage with her and lived with the current husband and then married him. When she got in an argument with her husband, she suffered his abuse when he took the tip of a screwdriver and held it to her neck, leaving a scar. After that, whenever they argued, the wife would try to commit suicide by slashing her wrists, or act as if she was going to burn herself to death by pouring kerosene all over herself, and whenever these incidents happened, the husband would beat her in the face to the point where she could not even walk. She was subject to severe violence multiple times. The husband said to his wife, who was pregnant with his baby, "Take the kids and get out," and repeatedly acted out violently toward her, but she did not leave. The younger son lost weight to the point where he was 3.2 kilograms less than what an average 3-year-old should weigh, and he slid into a state of emaciation. He was also beaten, and the parents took him into the hospital, but due to subdural haemorrhaging and sub membranous haemorrhaging from blows, he suffered brain damage and died. The wife, at the time, stood up for her husband at the police station and falsely reported that she committed the crime and was arrested.

## Analysis of the Cases and Considerations

**Bourdieu's Theory and Analysis of Human Behaviour**

Bourdieu's Theory is based on the acknowledgment that there are viewpoints rooted in sexual division of labour. The framework is rarely utilised for gender related research, and also has been the object of criticism by feminist theory. However, the Bourdieu's human behaviour model is thought to be valid for the analysis of the controlling actions of the symbolically dominant individual over the dominated (Bourdieu, 1980).

**The Habitus of DV** The wife who is the victim (hereafter called the battered wife) leaves the home to escape violence, but it is not uncommon for her to return to the husband (hereafter called the batterer husband). Cases 1 to 3 are all typical in that regard. In Case 2, the battered wife is subject to physical and verbal DV on a daily, frequent basis, and although she returns to her parents' home, wants to reconcile with her husband and keep her family intact, and does not want to get a divorce. Case 3 was widely reported in the media due to the death by abuse of a child fathered by an ex-husband. This shows how difficult it is to escape from a DV family, and at the same time indicates that escape or resolution is not necessarily what all battered wives want. The primary factor is not only a financial one, but also heavily involves psychological and emotional issues, and this customary DV pattern is what strongly stimulates the habitus of DV. For example, in Case 1, the marriage began with the wife entrusting her values and actions to her husband, but they were divorced due to the husband's petition after three months, and remarried after a year, so we can understand that this was a marriage controlled by the husband. If the wife did not submit, it would mean divorce, if she submitted, it would mean remarriage. This is a threatening form of psychological violence. It did not take long for the husband to establish his status as the patriarchal authority. The psychiatric attending physician described this couple as a "religious leader and follower," thus we can understand that this was a relationship of the controller and the controlled.

Because the battered wife accepts this type of relationship with the husband, we can say that the wife is "cooperatively" positioning herself in the habitus of DV. If we borrow Bourdieu's theory, the reaction that brings about habitus, in other words the response to DV, which brings about the disposition to habitus, involves "a process which is realised through a different aspect which is a strategic calculation that is realised

through a conscious aspect" (Bourdieu, 1988). DV's "past effectiveness" then becomes the "aim for expectations," and DV happens with this precedence in mind. The batterer, who is the performer of DV, looks at the present reaction of the wife and children to the acts of DV, and compares the "effectiveness" of it, and consciously or subconsciously transfers DV acts to an aim. For example, if a child is born to a DV family and the physical violence extends to the child, the battered wife by her own will escapes from a DV situation that has become a habitus. In Case 1, she contemplates divorce as a survivor of DV. But in Case 3, because the wife's goal is to maintain her relationship with the current husband, DV and abuse have become habitus. DV has become part of the family's process, and functions as a structure, which the batterer husband has acknowledged, and a mutually existing relationship with the battered wife has been constructed. Thus, because DV has become a habitus in the family, DV becomes the way of life, which holds a different value from good and evil, and DV's emphasis then continues to grow.

**The Reproduction of Habitus** In Case 3, the abuse centred on the children together with incidences of DV occurring at the same time. DV and abuse toward the children occurred on a daily basis, frequently enough to culminate in a dangerous level of common assault. Even so, the victim wife had a strong desire to maintain the relationship with her husband. From the perception of the battered wife, the husband's abuse towards her children from a prior marriage, whom he hated, was considered unavoidable "cooperation" by the wife in order to maintain her life with her husband and preserve her new family. The judicial decision stated, "The wife had a strong love and physical attachment to her husband and feared being disliked by him. We cannot say that it was considerably difficult to thwart her husband's violence." She was not confined due to domestic violence, but went to her parents' home to escape from him, and each time her husband enticed her back with sweet talk and she returned to him. This pattern was repeated, and she stated, "As a woman, I love my husband." Even after her child suffered from abuse and died, she defended her husband and it is noteworthy that what was considered an abnormal attachment to her husband was noted as "love" in the judgment.

Generally, most of the battered wives are unable to escape from a DV family based on the Theory of Learned Helplessness and the Economic Cost Priority Theory (Kaino, 2002). But as we have seen in the above cases, it is a reality that there are battered wives who do not fit into the stereotype. If these couples are in a co-dependent relationship or in a relationship of the financially controlling and controlled, their habitual experience of DV has become a habitus and a process which has become systematised. In a habitus, a pattern ripens and moves toward maturation, including the family in collective regularity. The reason for this is because actions are continuously maintained through "inclinations that are sociologically implanted" (Bourdieu, 1988). It is thought that the inclinations of the batterer husband and battered wife guide DV into an irregular system. DV is intimately connected and stimulated by personal problems and female discrimination problems within a social structure (Kaino, 2002). Historically, there was a time when violence toward wives was systematised under a patriarchal society (Millett, 1985). In present day Japan, it should be noted that the systems of sexual division of labour and the male domination of society and family structures are rooted in that patriarchal system. The abnormal "cooperation" that the battered wife shows toward the batterer husband is especially seen in Case 3, in what Lenore Walker has expressed as the third phase of the "Cycle of Violence" (Walker, 1997), the love between the couple is confirmed, which reinforces cooperation. This in turn reproduces the next DV habitus. For habitus reproduction, "within the many conditions of survival, various conditions connected to a certain specific gathering" are necessary (Millett, 1985). It can be said that for the DV abuser, the lifestyle of DV and the family are one of the conditions of his survival.

**Structure and Illusion** If habitus is pressed into a structure, "habitus has continuity, it becomes a system that can be transposed and has various psychological tendencies" and is "a structured structure that has an origin which reproduces practice and symbol and functions as the principle of an organization" (Bourdieu, 1988). Due to DV becoming a habitus, it is possible for it to be transposed, and can change into a different form without changing its prototype. So for the DV abuser, by creating a flexible and strategic psychological system, it is thought that it is possible to formulate his power structure. This process is indicated in the following chart. (Figure 1).

As in Cases 1 and 3, if there is a strong mutual psychological dependence and the family has multiple children, and DV is maintained as a long-term routine action, the habitus is strategically and regularly systematised with the cooperation of the family members and a power structure is built. Many battered wives make the decision to leave DV or escape earlier due to the existence and influence of children, but in reality, it continues to be difficult to do so. Professionals such as counsellors and doctors who well know the dangers of DV urge battered wives to leave the DV situation soon and encourage independence. But the battered wives in these cases are not special cases, they "cooperate" with their batterer husbands and reproduce the illusion of their family. The battered wife

misinterprets this as the reconstruction of love, and they believe that for them this creates results.

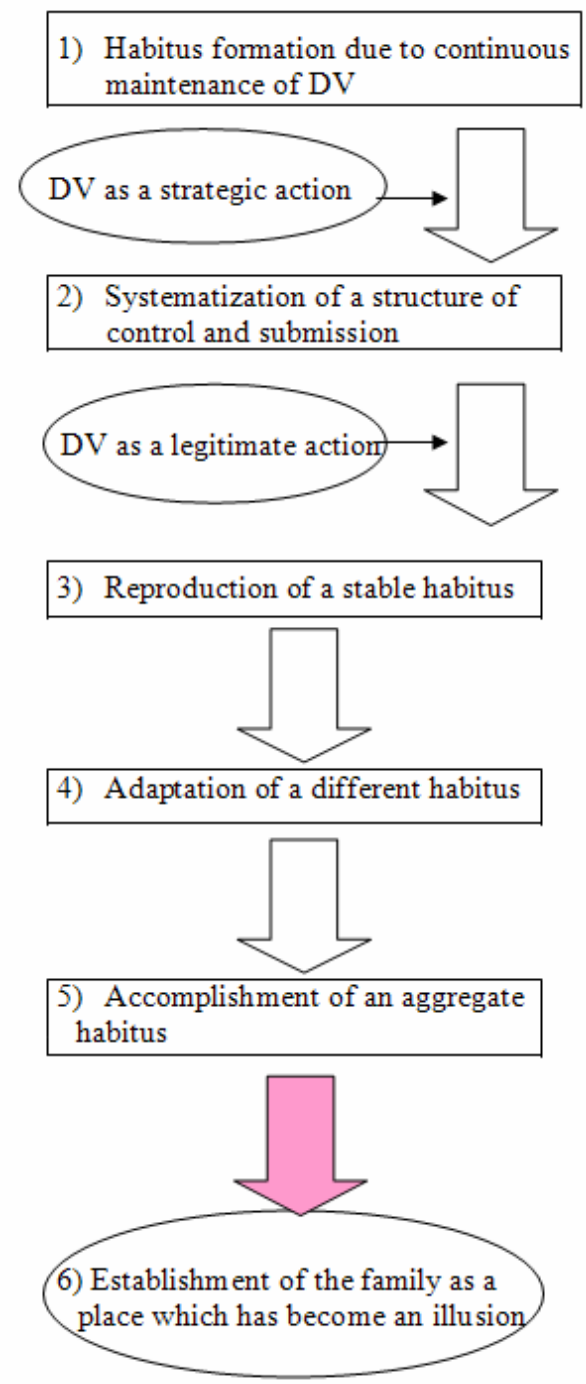



Figure 1: The process of DV and the molding of the family as strategic actions of the batterer.

## Conclusion

The common conditions that create a DV habitus in the cases mentioned in this paper are as follows. The marital relationship has been maintained for a long time. In particular, there are a multiple number of children. There is a deep psychological connection between the husband and wife, and the wife is particularly dependent on the husband. Thus a mutually co-dependent relationship of the controller and the controlled is constructed. The battered has poor earning power. The batterer and battered have a bias regarding the perception of gender roles (Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, 2003). The batterer has a strong affirmation for his patriarchal role. The battered is subject to the batterer's brainwashing and coercion.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1970) stated that the authority to exercise symbolic violence means to force many different meanings. One can "conceal the root of the power in an authoritative relationship" and justify the meaning and add a characteristically impressive power to the authoritative. In a DV situation, the person in authority legitimises his actions to become a part of the habitus, and at the same time has the power to justify the meaning of that. A schema exists of the DV batterer as the symbolic dominator, and the battered as the symbolic subordinate, and the authority within the family to control is established. The family members who submit need to shake the foundation of authority, but such a phenomenon would be unforgivable to the authoritarian who is the DV abuser. It would be an unbearable humiliation. Therefore, because the DV abuser can strategically select and act out DV, the family relationship is maintained and the family continues to function. In the cycle of domestic violence, there are short-lived moments of emotional stability, where the battered is made to support this dynamic, maintaining and building the family as an illusion. We can then see the difficulties of escaping DV for families who have been experiencing it for a long period of time.

## References

Bancroft, L., & Silverman, J. G. (2004). *Assessing abusers risks to children*. (Ikushima, Sachiko, Trans.). Tokyo: Kongo Publishers.

Bourdieu, P. (1980). *Le sens pratique.* Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

Bourdieu, P. (1988). *The logic of practice.* (Imanishi, Hitoshi, Trans.). Misuzu Shobo, 84-85.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J-C. (1970). La *reproduction.* Editions de Minuit. (Miyajima, Takashi, Trans., Fujiwara Shoten, 1991.)

Dutton, D., & Golant, S. K. (2001). *The batterer, a psychological profile*. (Nakamura, Tadashi, Trans.) Sakuhinsha, 102-105.

Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office. (2003). *Study of violence by spouses.* National Printing Bureau.

Kaino, T. (2002). *Domestic violence.* Tokyo: Fuma Press.

Komine, T, et al. (2003). Concern for incidents with a background of violence between husbands and wives. Choken Kiyo, *Bulletin of the Research & Training Institute for Family Court Probation Officers, 77*, 39-47.

Millett, K. (1985). *Sexual Politics.* Tokyo: Domesu Publishers.

Nakamura, T. (1999). Study of the domestic violence victims' program in the United States. *Ritsumeikan Social Sciences Review, 35*(1), 61.

Sapporo High Court, (U), 59. (2000). *Judicial Precedents. Precedent ID 2805520*, Criminal Div. Judgment.

Tokyo District Court, 1996 403. (1998). *Judicial Precedents. Precedent ID28050152*, Civil Div. 6 Judgment.

Walker, L. E. (1997). *The Battered Woman.* (Saito, Manabu, Trans.). Tokyo: Kongo Publishers.

Wiehe, V. R. (1998). *Understanding Family Violence.* USA: Sage.

# A Feminine Approach to Teaching a Large, First Year University Course: And Everyone Lived Happily Ever After!

**Kim Southey (southeyk@usq.edu.au),**
**Bernadette Lynch (lynchb@usq.edu.au),**
**Shalene Werth werths@usq.edu.au)**
School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Sara Hammer (hammers@uq.edu.au)**
School of Accounting, Economics and Finance, Faculty of Business
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

University of Southern Queensland (USQ) first year business students were more likely to pass MGT1000: Organisational Behaviour (OB) than any other Bachelor of Business core course during the period 2003-2005. This case study discusses the teaching approach of an all female team and outlines possible explanations for the favourable pass rate. Important to this case is that it shows women collaborating to support each other and their students through the learning journey. The Teaching Team intuitively implemented its teaching strategy and methods whilst engaging in critical reflective practice. This occurred within the realms of a teaching philosophy based on concern for the academic welfare of the students and manageability of workload for teaching staff. Support for these approaches is found in the literature on student success and retention as well as educational and feminine discourse theory. On the basis that the Team considers these to be the major contributing factors to the success of the OB students, this paper will address the Team's teaching philosophy; curriculum planning; course content; teaching materials and methodologies; student learning outcomes, and innovation in teaching.

## Introduction

This paper details our female team teaching experience that, indicative of a feminine intuitive approach, conforms to a number of theoretical ideals of best practice, even though finding the time to think about pedagogy in theoretical terms is a challenge. We discuss our experience from two perspectives. Firstly we briefly consider the feminine workplace discourse surrounding our teamwork as the three female course examiners. Secondly, the discussion turns to the design and delivery of the course in which we incorporate features of feminine rhetoric and communication. Our approach has proven to be some measure of success, with semester one, 2005 statistics showing that our course attained the highest pass and lowest fail rate of the eight faculty core courses and secondly, with the provision of a faculty teaching excellence award in 2007. These suggest an appreciation of a feminine approach by both students and colleagues.

The course in question is MGT1000 Organisational Behaviour (OB). It is offered over every semester and is a core course within the Bachelor of Business (and other Business courses) at the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). The total number of students enrolled each year is approximately 1100 individuals. It is offered at various campuses within USQ and by a large number of overseas partners. While OB is a core course, it is often chosen as an elective by students from other faculties. This brings a new dimension to the course as it then needs to meet the needs of students who have little interest in business as an area of study but who may potentially find the key concepts useful, particularly in relation to future management or supervisory positions.

## The Feminine – the Yin of the Yang

Whilst people possess a mixture of masculine and feminine traits (Lindsay & Pasquali, 1993; Gunn & Gullickson, 2007), the literature on organisational theory and teamwork tends to be written in a masculine dialogue (Metcalfe &Linstead, 2003). The masculine/feminine dichotomy can be described, from a psychological perspective, as the action and achievement oriented, individualistic, competitive, focused and independent 'masculine' versus the expressive, relationship building, intimate, attachment orientated and caring 'feminine' (Lindsay & Pasquali). A person's use of masculine/feminine traits is heavily based on social conditioning, with a 'healthy' expression being one where both masculine and feminine orientations are balanced (Lindsay & Pasquali, Gunn & Gullickson).

Relevant to this case study are the aspects of teamwork and communication. The transference of the feminine traits listed above to the literature on communication suggests that a feminine approach incorporates the disclosure of personal information or

experiences, and/or sharing narratives, examples and anecdotes in order to meet the desire to make a connection with the audience (Johnson, 2005). Inductive reasoning is also highlighted by Johnson as a feminine aspect of communication whereby the communicator illuminates facts, incidents or examples to the audience, before drawing a conclusion based on the presented information. Secondly, within the context of teamwork, the feminine aspects are those that are associated with the relational aspects of the team (Holmes & Schnurr, 2006, Metcalfe & Linstead, 2003) which demand "collaborative and supportive work attitudes" (Metcalfe & Linstead, p. 97). Relational practice is described by Fletcher (1999, in Holmes & Schnurr, p. 36) as "off-record, people orientated behaviour which serves to further workplace goals." An example offered by Holmes and Schnurr (pp.35-6) of relational behaviour is the feminine language people engage in when they want to show considerateness and concern for a person's ego by using a variety of 'hedges' and 'minimisers' such as: could; may be; might; I think; probably; a bit. Interestingly, it is the feminine aspects of teamwork, process and relationships, which are the essential element of a successful team (Metcalfe & Linstead).

## The Feminine in Teamwork – the Bernadette, the Kim and the Shalene

Our team has enjoyed the benefit of a friendly and collegial relationship. True to the suggestions that the feminine aspect of teamwork accounts for the relational and process aspects of a team, this team has at its foundation, three women who, over their cup of tea, without threat or competition, can openly discuss all aspects of their course. These discussions include topics such as things that did and did not go well in the course, sharing expectations and clarifying interpretation, discussing a course of action, developing new ideas and sometimes letting other ideas go and importantly, having a laugh! Essentially, this case serves to show the benefit of feminine traits in teamwork underpinned by the theoretical suggestion that successful team output is the result of intrinsically feminine traits of collaborative and supportive attitudes of each member (Metcalfe & Linstead, 2003).

## The Feminine in Communication – the Design and Delivery of the Course

Teaching a large first year course is simultaneously challenging and exhausting. The excitement and stress involved with presenting to a class of over 200 on-campus students while managing an online course website for an additional 300 or so students carries with it its own set of anomalous stressors. Some of these include planning the semester, crafting teaching materials and designing presentations and all of these are creative tasks which are not well defined by any workload formula and tend to reinforce the concept of the university as a "greedy organisation" where workers are placed under exponential pressure by demanding but also interesting and exciting jobs (Rasmussen, 2004). So it is hardly surprising that much of our own course design and delivery has evolved organically over time, through a long association with students and an equally long association with teachers and an understanding of their needs. Key pedagogical concepts for higher education, such as the issues of transition, the importance of "social presence", constructivism, and reflective practice all provide sound theoretical bases for our teaching. However, in our case their application came about largely through the practical wisdom and accumulated experiences of the Teaching Team. It is a happy coincidence that we later found our approach to teaching was supported by both university policy and theory (Hambrick, 2005, in Kilduff, 2006).

**The Feminine Inspired Team Teaching Philosophy** In our role as course designers and course examiners our underlying teaching philosophy exhibit aspects of 'feminine leadership traits' which incorporate the championing of family friendly policies, openness, teamwork and communication (Everbach, 2006) and feminine relational practice of concern for the people involved in the course and their goal achievement. The impact of the Team's teaching philosophy on the evolution of the course has been profound with the adoption of the following three key (feminine) principles to which we test each innovation and or/each reflection: 1) Is what we are doing educationally sound? That is, will it enhance learning outcomes? 2) Is what we are doing equitable to other students? 3) Is this a reasonable expectation that will not drain the life force out of us or our students? (This involves inserting a concern for work-life balance for both the Team and students into our curriculum design). The following sections of this paper will show how a feminine premise has influenced key areas of our course design and delivery, which are curriculum planning, course content, teaching materials and methodologies, and innovation in teaching.

**Curriculum Planning** Our approach to curriculum planning also reflects our philosophy, but it also conforms to disciplinary understandings of 'best practice' for team teaching and large first year classes with a diverse cohort. The Teaching Team's approach to curriculum planning has two significant qualities. First, it is student-centred, with a focus on the development of key skills which facilitate the transition of first year students into higher education (Barrie, 2003; Chanock, 2001; Kift & Nelson, 2005; Kirkpatrick

& Mulligan, 2002) and contribute to the development of USQ graduate attributes. This is important because it reflects a key outcome of the business curriculum in higher education: to facilitate the transition of students from teacher-pupil dependency to adult independent learners (Boud, 2000). Second, it is collaborative, with all members of the OB Team making a vital contribution to the planning and implementation of curricular innovation.

The Faculty of Business preferred enrolment pattern is that students undertake this course in their first year of study. As a result, a large proportion of our students are new to the university environment. The Team has developed a curriculum that aims to facilitate the transition of first year students from a high school to an adult learning context. Because of its teaching philosophy, the OB Team consider this a prime opportunity, if not an obligation, to provide students with the opportunity to develop skills in the areas of research, the importance of accurate referencing and the implications of plagiarism, critical thinking and written communication. The Team's view is that these are fundamental skills that contribute to retention and progression by enabling students to successfully complete their chosen program. This has the added advantage of contributing to the development of the following USQ graduate attributes: 1) analytical and critical thinking skills; 2) information acquisition, organisation and independent learning skills; 3) communication and presentation skills; and 4) an awareness of the need for, and an understanding of high professional standards and ethical behaviour.

At a fundamental level, the curriculum develops students' comprehension of the traditional OB theory taught across universities. However, disciplinary content is delivered in a way that transcends the traditional paradigm of 'teaching content', which students are expected to use 'intuitively' to solve management problems. In OB, we constructively align teaching practice with expected learning outcomes, such as problem-solving, by setting a challenge or problem for students to solve, providing them with task-specific learning support, feedback and explicit skills-based teaching, which enables them to resolve the challenge. This process is explored in detail under the criteria of course content, teaching methodology and learning resources.

Innovations in the course curriculum have evolved as a result of a collaborative team process - with each of the triad providing an essential contribution which has had a significant impact on course design and delivery. This reflects a well-known OB maxim that teams are more than just a group of individuals. It requires team synergies and reflective practice to maintain our focus across semesters whilst Team members rotate through the course leader role. As an example of individual Team contributions, Bernadette currently fulfils the overall leadership role which involves such things as undertaking the major rewrite and scheduling of assessment topic areas. Her contribution tends to reflect her experience with the theory of the course as well as her extensive teaching experience. Shalene provides expertise in developing the exam database to which the three members diligently contribute in successive semesters. She also improved aspects of social presence and collaborative learning in the course by laying the foundation for effective use of the discussion board and online media for all students but, in particular, distance education students. Kim uses her teaching experience to challenge team norms and contributes alternative ideas in relation to grading and assessment practices. Her talent for playing devil's advocate in our reflective practice discussions has provided a significant catalyst for change within the course materials and an enhanced version of the assessment rubric.

**Course Content** In addition to its theoretical focus, the course content demonstrates a sensitivity to its overall position in USQ's business programs, as well as an awareness of the first year context with its inherent issues of student retention and transition. Consequently, we provide several skills-based modules, which are embedded in the course content. These include two modules on the essential elements of essay-writing preparation. These research and academic writing modules cover areas such as: finding journal articles using USQ databases; guidelines on using the internet to search for sources; locating research support services from the Library; providing guidelines on how to analyse a case study; providing information on good writing resources and providing students with exemplars of good essays. These are designed with the end user in mind. For example, pictures of screens used to access USQ databases give students the information they require to successfully navigate this area and find the information they need.

The key idea behind integrating learning support measures into this course has been to build confidence in the students, which, in turn, enables them to excel academically. Our premise is that we provide students with the research and academic writing knowledge required for success in the course, which in turn gives them the courage and knowledge to believe that they can succeed, irrespective of their high school OP score or previous study experiences. This is achieved through a 'scaffolding' approach, which makes both required learning processes and disciplinary content more transparent and accessible (Chanock, 2001). For example, we teach them to access the library databases, and provide guidance in effective research, and then tutor the students in critical writing. This developmental approach promotes student success and results in

greater student retention and improved transition (Lawrence, 2005). Results show that the OB course had the highest percentage pass rate of all the courses in this category.

**Teaching Materials and Methodologies** The teaching material and methodologies provide the prime opportunity to incorporate feminine traits in the course as they serve as the communication channel between examiner and student. This current iteration of our course materials has benefited from the collective wisdom of the Team and our collective philosophical commitment to student retention and student transition to university. The core course materials are primarily made up of: the Study Guide; the Text Book; the Introductory book; the weekly two-hour course tutorial session; the course webpage; emails sent to all students in the course; and the course CD which includes PowerPoint lectures (most with audio) for each week the of the semester. A key value embedded in the materials is user friendliness. The materials needed to be something the students found easy to navigate. Consequently, we designed the Study Guide so that it is written in a clear, welcoming voice, which sets an overall tone for the course.

The voice adopted in the Study Guide and the emails which are sent to students over the semester explicitly addresses some of the emotional support issues that students may have (Lawrence, 2005). For example, students are assured that being confused, uncertain or overwhelmed is normal in study. The stresses associated with essay writing and exams are explicitly addressed. The feedback we have received from students on the tone of the materials demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach:

*Personal comments in the study guide – felt like a 'person' was writing to me (USQ Student Feedback Form, Semester 3 2005).*

*Every thing was explained very well in the study book, so I don't know of any improvements… the study book was like she was talking to us face to face, so as an external student, this made me understand it very well. Good job everyone! (USQ Student Feedback Form, Semester 2, 2006).*

In addition, the voice and structure of the study materials accommodate a range of learning styles, for example, audio breeze slides to reach mass numbers of external students.

*I found the weekly lecture slides very helpful – it was like actually being there with the lecturer ... this course was very helpful and clear – well done! (USQ Student Feedback Form, Semester 2, 2004).*

The structure and voice of the Study Guide take many of the unknowns out of study in terms of time commitment. For example, the course is made up of ten modules with each module taking approximately one week to complete. It usually involves reading approximately thirty pages from the text. Each module is given a rating on a 1-5 scale to reflect its level of difficulty. Extraneous information has been structured out of the Study Guide given students' time poverty. Each module includes a brief overview of that week's reading that acts as a kind of advance organiser. The following is indicative of feedback we have received from students about this aspect of the Study Guide:

*I found the ratings and commentary for each module very helpful! I liked knowing exactly what I was doing in each module. The module objectives were made very clear and were easy to find in the textbook. (USQ Student Feedback Form, Semester 2, 2006).*

When appropriate, more difficult concepts are explained in some detail. These are written as a short stand-alone 'essay' with embedded exercises but no specific reference to the text. In terms of curriculum design these introductions take the student from: (a) The simple to the complex (we start by analysing a single definition and then move to comparing two and three definitions of the same concept as an introduction to critical thinking); (b) The known to the unknown (we introduce the concept of organisational structure by looking at a family tree); and (c) The concrete to the abstract (we introduce organisational structure by presenting a skeleton as a metaphor for organisational structure).

Each module includes a stand-alone section entitled 'learning objectives from the text', which lists each learning objective from the module and the page numbers in the text that relate to that learning objective. The following exemplifies feedback from students about the presentation of concepts:

*This course was inspiring. I enjoyed the information and could easily relate it to day to day events, past and present life experience. Should be a <u>must</u> for everyone!! (USQ Student Feedback Form Semester 2, 2004).*

A further key value that we wished to embed in the materials was transition friendliness. We wanted the materials in and of themselves to make the transition of students to university as easy as possible. The Study Guide makes explicit many of the unwritten tasks that students must complete to be successful in the first few weeks of their study. For example A 'Must Do Tasks' section is included in the first few weeks that identifies which learning materials students need to buy and where to by them; alerts students to the information technology demands of the course; advises about the final date for dropping the course; and directs them to the Student Services website for details on how to think through their options. The Study Guide also models, analyses and explains many foundation academic skills and values. These include how to analyse a definition; how to compare and or synthesise two definitions; the use of different genres in academic writing and

thinking; and the basics of essay writing and referencing.

The weekly tutorial activities usually serve at least two purposes: content coverage and modelling of basic academic skills. For example in the week on organisational culture students complete a brief writing exercise in which they analyse a case study about Nike and write a couple of brief paragraphs using a formula for applying theory to a case study. The two weeks prior to the submission of the essay are devoted exclusively to essay writing – with no new discipline based content being provided. The following feedback indicates the value that students see in the time devoted to transitional issues:

*An excellent course for first year students; guided us through essay writing and using electronic resources in a very clear and instructive manner, (wish I had of completed this course earlier!!!) Many thanks (USQ Student Feedback Form, Semester 3, 2005).*

*I loved this course. I found the two modules on assignment writing very helpful and will use that information with other classes (USQ Student Feedback Form, Semester 2, 2006).*

**Innovation in Teaching** Due to the large number and diversity of students enrolled in this course, innovative teaching has become a hallmark and a professional requirement for those who teach it. Some of the innovations introduced, complex or simple, have been introduced intuitively and have enjoyed success because they met the needs of the students. The flexibility and innovation of the OB Team has provided an ideal platform for introducing changes to the course, which best meet the needs of both the teaching staff and the students. These innovations include reflective practice (Fyfe, 2002; Radloff & de la Harpe, 2001) and building relationships (Zimitat, 2003) in a mass education environment.

In the assessment for OB we have included a learning diary, completed by the students in order to formulate in their own minds what is and is not working with their own learning. This process has the additional benefit of providing feedback from the students to the Teaching Team each semester on how they perceive the relationship between themselves and the course. Reflective practice has also impacted on the way we work as a team – on the way Team members debrief after lectures, unpack critical incidents, and discuss ideas before their implementation. Evaluation of how current theory can improve our teaching has proved to be an invaluable tool in enhancing our innovative practice.

Our experiences in OB affirm that social presence is a contributing factor to student success (Zimitat, 2003). In this course providing social presence to students in the form of regular class emails, the conversational voice used in the study materials and participation on the study desk has resulted in students feeling that they are relating to a real individual rather than a distant academic with no real identity or interest in their welfare. However, as this course is so large it has been important for the Team to set boundaries around the amount of time available for each student. As a result of this students are asked to always be prepared with specific questions when meeting with any of the Teaching Team; to have read all information relating to their topic of inquiry before asking for assistance, and to participate wherever possible in discussion groups and use other available on-line resources. Students are put in charge of their learning in other ways, running on-line discussion groups with the lecturer looking in regularly to monitor how things are going. This has resulted in a very collegial atmosphere on the course website, with students working to enhance their own learning and that of their colleagues.

**Student Learning Outcomes** Our efforts to provide effective teaching and learning support to our students have been quantitatively measured. It has been found that course retention and pass rates for students particularly in the low OP student group are the highest for any core course in the Faculty of Business. Results again have shown that in OB, students with an OP score lower than 16 (that is, 16-18) still managed to pass at a rate greater than the other core courses.

The OB Team believes that facilitating the transition of first year students into higher education provides a solid foundation for their future learning development. For this reason, we see student learning and student transition as being intimately linked. Consequently, we endeavour to create a sense of belonging and community within the student group to facilitate students' social transition to the university. We also actively value and speak to the issue of emotional intelligence and its role in study. For example OB has at various times hosted a citizenship awards function to reward students who add value to the learning environment. Students may be nominated by either the staff or fellow students for this award. Research shows that reflective learning plays an important role in university study achievement (Radloff & de la Harpe, 2001). We regard it as a critical component of student learning. Our valuing of reflection is demonstrated through the inclusion of the learning diary exercise as a formative assessment piece.

## Conclusion

The supportive feminine traits identified in our case have provided a sense of satisfaction to the OB Team, intensified by the appreciation of the students. We have also been pleasantly surprised by the support we' have

received from colleagues who have affirmed the practices we have implemented. Premised by theory on the caring but persuasive power of a feminine discourse, our practical wisdom approach to our teaching has been confirmed by our research into the educational theory on transition issues, social presence, constructivism and reflective practice.

## References


Barrie, S. (2004). A research-based approach to generic graduate attributes policy. *Higher Education Research and Development*, *23*(3), 261-275.

Boud, D. (2000). Sustainable assessment: rethinking assessment for the learning society. *Studies in Continuing Education*, *22*(2), 151-167.

Chanock, K. (2001). From mystery to mastery. *Changing identities: Australian language and academic skills conference* Trivett, N. (Ed.). Wollongong NSW: University of Wollongong.

Gunn, B., & Gullickson, B. (2007). No hands tied. *Strategic Finance, February*, (8-10).

Everbach, T. (2006). The culture of a women-led newspaper: An ethnographic study of the Sarasota Herald-Tribune. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 83*(3), 477-493.

Fyfe, G. (2002). Building reflective practice into student learning. In *Focusing on the Student, Proceedings of the 11th Annual Teaching Learning Forum.* Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia: http://lsn.curtin.edu.au/tlf/tlf2002/fyfe.html

Holmes, J., & Schnurr, S. (2006). 'Doing femininity' at work: More than just relational practice. *Journal of Sociolinguistics, 10*(1), 31-51.

Johnson, D. (2005). Feminine style in presidential debate discourse, 1960-2000. *Communication Quarterly, 53*(1), 3-20.

Kift, S., & Nelson, K. (2005). Beyond curriculum reform: Embedding the transition experience. In A. Brew & C. Asmar (Eds.). *Proceedings of the 2005 Conference of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia* (pp. 225-235), The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

Kilduff, M. (2006). Editor's comments: Publishing theory. *Academy of Management Review*, *31*(2), 252-255.

Kirkpatrick, A., & Mulligan, D. (2002). Cultures of learning: Critical reading in the social and applied sciences, *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, *25*(2), 73-99.

Lawrence, J. (2005). Re-conceptualising attrition and retention: integrating theoretical, research and student perspectives. *Studies in Learning, Evaluation, Innovation and Development*, *2*(3), 16-33.

Lindsay, C., & Pasquali, J. (1993). The wounded feminine: From organizational abuse to personal healing. *Business Horizons, March/April*, 35-41.

Metcalfe, B., & Linstead, A. (2003). Gendering Teamwork: Re-Writing the Feminine. *Gender, Work and Organisation, 10*(1), 94-119.

Radloff, A., & de la Harpe, B. (2001). Expanding what and how we assess: Going beyond the content. *Proceedings of the teaching and learning forum, Curtin University of Technology*, Perth, Australia.

Rasmussen, B. (2004). Between endless needs and limited resources: The gendered construction of a greedy organisation. *Gender, Work and Organisation*, *11*(5), 506-525.

Zimitat, C. (2003). First-year students' perceptions of inclusion and relationships with other university experiences. In C. Bond & P. Bright (Eds.). *Learning for an unknown Future: Proceedings of the 2003 Annual International Conference of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia* (pp. 648-654). Christchurch, New Zealand.

# Whither engagement? Challenges for community engagement within academia

**Cassandra Star (star@usq.edu.au)**
School of Accounting, Economics and Finance, Faculty of Business
Centre for Sustainable Catchments
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

Despite the commitment to engagement with the broader community that is central to understandings of the role of academics within the university tradition, there are now significant barriers to the performance of this role. Significant changes in the management, funding and priorities of universities (prompted by government policy) have created conditions where community engagement is placed a distant third in the professional lives of contemporary academics behind research and teaching. Some have suggested that community engagement is not just a low priority activity in modern academia, but one that is consciously discouraged through questioned academic freedoms, more tenuous employment circumstances, and restrictive codes of conduct conditions at several universities. In addition, the widespread work intensification that has accompanied these other changes in University management has created significant disincentive to engage in community engagement for early career academics, women with children, and those seeking a healthy work-life balance. This paper argues that while there has been much discussion of the privileging of research over teaching, the value and commitment to community service remains at the margins of reality and debate in Australian universities, and will continue to be while these challenges remain.

## Introduction

Despite the commitment to engagement with the broader community that is central to understandings of the role of academics within the university tradition, there are now significant barriers to the performance of this role. Significant changes in the management, funding and priorities of universities (prompted by government policy) have created conditions where community engagement comes an inevitable distant third in the lives of most contemporary academics behind research and teaching. Some have suggested that community engagement is not just a low priority activity in modern academia, but one that is consciously discouraged through waning academic freedoms, more tenuous employment circumstances, and restrictive codes of conduct conditions at several universities (Polya, 2001/2002).

This paper argues that while there has been much discussion of the privileging of research over teaching, the value and commitment to *community* service remains at the margins of reality and debate in Australian universities.

## Community engagement and the academic in Australian higher education

To begin, I examine two key ideas central to the question of how the university should engage with the community and why. In this section I outline the traditional notion of the university and its role within wider society. The understanding(s) of the role of the University within the community shapes significantly both University and community expectations of engagement activities. In addition, the role of the academic on an individual basis is discussed to contextualise university expectations of individual academics with respect to community engagement.

### The role of the academic

The working life of the academic has been conceived as a group of interrelated, equally important, roles: the teacher, the researcher, and the public intellectual. The belief that "universities have a role in conserving and transmitting a public culture" (Maddox, 2000, p. 327) is a long standing tradition in Australian universities. A well-developed academic is thought to be one that meaningfully engages all three of these critical purposes and domains in their work and continues to improve this engagement through self-reflection and personal development.

One of the reasons for an emphasis on the three facets of academic life and community engagement has been the acknowledgement that one of the important roles of the university is to be involved in, and contribute to, public debate. Community involvement and communication is at the heart of the relevance of academic pursuits. Interaction and participation in the wider community is essential to facilitate the dispersal and discussion of research insights and to stimulate debate on important issues. Universities in Australia have long been considered an important contributor to public life and the public good (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001), as well as a crucial site for knowledge generation and the development of

intellectuals. These public roles assume engagement with the community as part of the wider identity and purpose of the university, and its academics.

Recent reforms in Australian higher education however have shifted understandings of what the university is. The net impact of these reforms has been to re-make universities as corporations and to step away from the notion of them contributing to the public good and the community (Marginson, 2003). Universities are now conceived as corporations providing a private good for individual consumers. New priorities, funding arrangements and governance structures within universities emphasise commercialisation and place significant drivers on academics to privilege applied, industry-relevant commercial research above non-commercial research, teaching and community engagement. Increasingly, notions of community engagement and relevance in universities are becoming conceived through the lens of commercialisation. Service has become something provided to students of higher education, and on committees within universities, rather than something performed as a public good to the wider community. Thus, to many academics and universities, service is to the profession or the University.

Indeed, community engagement itself, and what it means, is being significantly re-made. Relevance has come to be defined by vocation and outcomes based teaching and learning. The relevance of academic learning and academia itself has been vocationalised (Duke, 2004) – thus, community engagement has increasingly become thought of as a process of engaging students with the workplaces and industries they will work in. Community engagement is something academics help students do; the literature is dominated by examples of community engagement as 'service learning' (e.g., see: McFadden et al., 2002; Ross & Ardel, 1999), or internships and industry placements to provide 'learning for the workplace' (Langworthy & Turner, 2003). For example, Griffith University's Academic Plan sets out five signature experiences to promote, including engaging community. It places value on: 'community engagement as a *context for learning*' (O'Connor, 2003, p. 2; emphasis added). Thus, in this understanding of community engagement, the focus is on the student experience of learning within a community context, rather than meeting community need per se. These comments should not be seen to detract from the valuable experiences service learning or work-integrated-learning provides students; however, the university's engagement with the wider community cannot be reduced simply to vocational placement opportunities for students during their education.

The other way in which community engagement has come to be thought of is as "relevant" research; academics show community engagement through applied, industry-based or commercially relevant research and partnerships. Research which has clear commercial applications, and industry-based research partnerships, are encouraged by universities that have experienced declining direct funding for research, as well as an increase in competition for a much reduced external funding pool. Australian Research Council (ARC) funding attracts applications from only the top 10% of researchers in Australian universities, yet only has a 20% success rate (Polya, 2001/2002). With such intense competition, it's not surprising that universities and researchers have turned to promoting projects with an external commercial or industry focus to access funds. Despite the decline in direct funding, government measures of university "success" still focus overwhelmingly on research output, thus, so must universities.

However, one area where academics may be able to significantly contribute to the public good is through linking community engagement to their research. Unfortunately, research funding opportunities with *community based* partners are limited. ARC Linkage Grants do provide the possibility of collaboration with community partners, though many would be limited by the requirement to provide funds or resources that are then matched by the ARC if the application is successful (Webber, 2002). This is especially unlikely in light of the preference given to those projects where community partners are shown to contribute a significant financial commitment, rather than just time, personnel or materials (Graeme Turner, personal communication, August 6 2004). University research budgets also make only small proportions of their total available for community partnership research, if at all, providing the bulk of their internal budgets for developing projects with medium-term prospects as industry-based, commercially-applicable, or ARC fundable research. These trends will only be exacerbated further by the current RQF (research quality framework) exercise being conducted.

Thus, the idea of research as a public good for the benefit of the community has been eroded with Australian universities instead moving towards research that has clear commercial applications and industry-based applications for particular clients (Polya, 2001/2002). Increasingly, government funding formulas have privileged those outcomes that can be easily quantified for measurement, and research is no different (DETYA, 1999) and unquantifiable outputs have become at risk of marginalisation. Again, this implication is further amplified by the RQF in Australian universities. Further underlining this, staff are promoted and given prestige on the basis of research output and funding attracted (Webber, 2002). Therefore, community engagement and service is also

marginalised, not just by the emphasis on research in university reward systems, but also through the *type* of research that is encouraged, funded and ultimately privileged within academia.

### Earlier notions of public debate and engagement

Universities, while conceived and practised as institutions for the elite, were also considered to be important contributors, initiators, and vehicles of public debate and engagement. While it is certainly arguable that this engagement was limited to certain sections of the community, notably bureaucracy and government officialdom, the ivory tower was regardless a part of, or expected to be part of, active debate and engagement in the public domain.

This public role of universities, as well as their contribution to training a professional elite and contributing to public research and innovation, has been an important justification for the public funding of universities, and other governmental support. Universities are conceived to have contributed to, and been part of, the public good.

Thus, the role of academics has been formalised as one consisting of three separate roles: teaching, research and community service. However, over time, this definition of the academic role appears to have changed. The literature of academic roles and workloads predominantly refers to administration in the place of service (McInnis, 1996; 2000). There is some mystery surrounding how and why this third role of academics transformed, but the subtle changes in the literature appear from the early 1980s. In some universities, the role went from community service to simply service, which implied an interpretation of 'service to the university' rather than 'service to the community'. This certainly marked a beginning in Australian universities of a move away from a public role for individual academics. Over time, this role has shifted to being widely accepted as administration, which has come to be an important role for academics through the changes to university management structures and the role of academics within it.

## How are universities engaging?

Community engagement is a broad term, and one that can mean many things. However, I argue that in this paper, the current activities and projects undertaken by universities that they point to as constituting community engagement can be categorised as one of three types: engagement through research, engagement through community partnerships, and engagement through teaching and learning. In each of these areas, what has come to represent community engagement is actually a clear retreat from the university as a public good, and has become commodified – a move toward commodifying the activities of Universities further.

### Engagement through research

One of the areas that universities point to as being of significant benefit and of providing important engagement with the community is the through research. It is argued that research in and of itself provides tangible and intangible benefits to the community. Others have been known to argue that research can constitute community service, for example, in the area of health research (see: Arcury, 1999; Westall et al., 2006). However, community engagement is not the same as community service – indeed, service can be a passive act, performed without any regard for the needs, desires or preferences of the community. Community engagement requires entering the community, it requires public engagement and debate with the community. Research therefore that is community engagement cannot be research that is conducted without the consultation, involvement and perhaps even request of the community. This certainly disqualifies much research within universities that is argued to be community engagement. Research with broad or amorphous benefits, certainly does not qualify as engaged research. Not all research has to be disqualified, but it certainly does narrow what research might be considered engaged research, and it does suggest that research conducted within these parameters, is not the kind of research that is funded, pursued or rewarded by universities. This is particularly important when one considers the declining amount of research funding available, the increasing competition for available funds, and the impending introduction of new quality assurance and funding imperatives for universities (such as the Research Quality Framework) based on the research outputs of individual Universities. Thus, even universities or academics interested in undertaking truly engaged research, are constrained by the imperatives of current higher education policies and funding availability.

### Engagement through community partnerships

A potential area of significant community engagement is through research partnerships with communities and/or community organisations. However, successfully conceiving, funding and completing of such partnerships faces significant challenges. In a time when community organisations and community projects have experienced declining public investment from the Howard government, many community organisations that have experienced public support in the past are struggling to maintain their day to day functions (Maddison & Denniss, 2006), let alone

being able to fund staff or research important to their goals.

However, there are significant barriers to this potential being realised. One of the clearest issues related to community based research partnerships is related to funding imperatives. Universities have experienced declining real investment and are thus only able to undertake research partnerships where measured outputs are available, and preferably, plentiful. The majority of university and external funding schemes designed for community based partnerships, are actually designed for commercial partnerships – the partner organisation is expected to provide matching support equal with that supplied by the funding body in cash, staffing, and other support. This certainly limits opportunities for individual researchers to establish partnerships with community organisations that lack the resources for research or other projects. Again, this is an example of the commodification of opportunities for engagement between universities and the community, removing them further from a public purpose.

### Engagement through teaching and learning

One of the areas that is particularly significant for community engagement is the increasing popularity of service teaching or work learning or service learning. Well established in the United States, this is a method by which universities or colleges engage local communities through students. Typically, courses and course credit is structured around a project, or a component of service learning in organisations or service fields (i.e., teaching, nursing, etc.) that serves local communities, but also provides individual students with practical training and skills relevant to their future career aspirations. While from a pedagogical standpoint, these schemes are important for students, one can question whether local community needs are necessarily met, or fully understood. The primary motivation for such projects is to provide students with important aspects of career training, but often, another reason cited is to provide them with a sense of citizenship or civic responsibility (Mehafey, 2005; Trostle & Hersh, 2003). While these are worthwhile aims, there is no guarantee that such projects are always designed or implemented with the community's needs in mind. Rather, projects of this nature, or community engagement projects of this kind, represent community engagement that provides a direct benefit to universities and individual students, again representing a commodification, rather than true community engagement.

## Obstacles to engagement

I argue that the current modes of engaging community through and within university structures is primarily organised around a commodification of the university's relationships with society. I argue that a key role once performed within public debate and by individual public intellectuals has been negatively impacted by this ongoing commodification and has decreased the public face and public engagement of universities. Further discounting and reductions in society's embrace and expectations of a public role for universities has the potential to further devalue the public role and thus public funding of universities.

There has been much written, over the last 10 years about the decline of the public intellectual. While we need not be as dramatic as Karger and Hernandez (2004) or Macfarlane (2005) in pronouncing the death of the public intellectual, it can certainly be argued that the decline has been swift and dramatic – prominent public intellectuals are few and far between. The academic has certainly retreated from the public domain, and the reasons for this are too many to explore fully in this paper except to say that the constraints on academic engagement with the community occur at the individual level, the university level, the community level, and due to larger constraints in the public domain – overcoming these barriers are an individual academic is difficult. One interesting factor behind this has been the perception of public engagement as activism. It is true that some public intellectuals certainly perform an advocacy or activism role in their community engagement, for example, John Pilger and Noam Chomsky. However, it is the subtle criticism here that needs to be examined. The perception of a public intellectual as an activist suggests that activism is somehow an inherently bad thing. In the context of increased corporatisation of universities, of narrowing of university agendas, and of tighter control of the role of academics, this is a dangerous suggestion. I would suggest however that activism can only be an inherently bad thing if it is somehow based on the assumption that those who are activists are not objective and those who are not activists are objective.

Perhaps most importantly, the potential for community engagement itself relies on a strong and healthy public domain. Developments in neo-liberal societies certainly highlight the decline of the public domain. Engagement, speech and assembly in the public domain has certainly declined and become more regulated (in regard to Australia, see Hamilton & Maddisson, 2007). Also, as governments and the state withdraws further from public life, and as important aspects of social, political and economic life are privatised, the public domain itself becomes smaller and more tenuous.

## Conclusion

A key question that remains outstanding in the debate on universities and community engagement is that of

determining what communities want. As community engagement becomes increasingly commodified, this is a question that is considered less and less. In a commodified approach to community engagement, the key question is not what the community needs, but what certain sections of the community want and can afford, as well as pinpointing those groups able to assist with meeting students' employment aspirations.

When decisions about community engagement are driven by commercial imperatives rather than identified or articulated community need, the focus of engagement is not only narrow, but also skewed. Research projects, work-integrated-learning, or community service learning and collaborative projects under such an approach, will fail to be driven by community need, and will instead be driven by the imperatives of both university funding, such as quality research outputs, and by those community groups and agents that can afford to engage with universities and projects. This approach neglects that real community needs will not be met when this is not the primary determinant in the process of choosing means and avenues of engaging with the community or society as a whole.

## Acknowledgments

I acknowledge discussions and input of the following people into my thinking on this issue: Dr Sara Hammer, Robyn Stephens, and Dr James Whelan.

## References

Adams, M., & Rytmeister, C. (2000). *Beginning the academic career: How can it best be supported in the changing university climate*. Paper presented at the ASET HERDSA 2000 Conference, Toowoomba, Australia.

Alcoff, L. M. (2002). Does the public intellectual have intellectual integrity? *Metaphilosophy 33* (5), 521-534.

Arcury, T. A., Austin, C. K., Quandt, S. A., Rose, & Saavedra, R. (1999). Enhancing community participation in intervention research: Farmworkers and agricultural chemicals in North Carolina. *Health Education & Behavior*, *26*(4) 563-578.

Baker, R. G. (1995). *Valuing teaching and learning in a university: Differing academic staff perceptions.* Paper presented at the Teaching and Learning forum 1995, Perth, Western Australia.

DETYA. (1999). *Higher education and publication research data collection*. Canberra: DETYA.

Doring, A. (2002). Challenges to the academic role of change agent. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 26* (2) 139-148.

Duke, C. (2004). Is there an Australian idea of a university? *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *26*(3) 297-314.

Fogg, P. (2003). Fresno State criticized for invitations to radical environmentalists, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *49*(23) A.12.

Hamilton C., & Maddison, S. (Eds.). (2007). *Silencing dissent: How the Australian government is controlling public opinion and stifling debate*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

Jenni, K. (2001). The moral responsibilities of intellectuals, *Social Theory and Practice*, *27* (3), 437-454.

Karger, H. J., & Hernandez, M. T. (2004). The declimate of the public intellectual in social work, *Journal of sociology and social welfare, XXXI*(3), 51-68.

Langworthy, A., & Turner, T. (2003). *Learning for the workplace and beyond: The challenge of university-community engagement*. Paper presented at the ASET HERDSA 2003 Conference, Christchurch, New Zealand.

McFadden, M., Johnston, K., & McMeniman, M. (2002). *Community engagement teacher education and service learning - National and international perspectives.* Paper presented at AARE International Education Research Conference, Brisbane, Australia.

Macfarlane, B. (2005). The disengaged academic: The retreat from citizenship. *Higher Education Quarterly, 59*(4), 296-312.

McInnis, C. (2000). Changing academic work roles: the everyday realities challenging quality in teaching. *Quality in Higher Education*, *6*(2) 143-152

McInnis, C. (1996). Change and diversity in the work patterns of Australian academics. *Higher Education Management*, 8(2) 105-117.

Maddison, S., & Denniss, R. (2006). Democratic constraint and embrace: Implications for progressive non-government advocacy organisations in Australia, *Australian Journal of Political Science, 40*(3), 373-389.

Maddox. G. (2000). Review article: Australian universities in crisis. *Prometheus 18*(3), 327-332.

Marginson, S. (2003, November). *Markets in higher education: National and global competition*. Paper presented at the NZARE/AARE Joint Conference, Auckland, New Zealand.

Mehafey, G. L. (2005). The story of the American democracy project. *Change*, September/October, 68-74.

Payne Adler, F. (2002). Activism in academia: A social action writing program, *Social Justice*, *29* (4), 136-149.

Polya, G. (2001/2002). Universities in crisis. *Tirra Lirra* (Summer) 2-3.

Ross, C. & Ardel, T. (1999). *Service learning and community service writing: moving from theory to practice with "real" world writing*. Paper presented at HERDSA Annual International Conference, Melbourne, Australia.

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee. (2001). *Universities in Crisis*. Canberra: AGPS.

Stewart, J. (1999). It's Academic, *Quadrant (June),* 28-32.

Trostle, J. & Hersh, R. H. (2003). Lessons from a college promoting civic engagement, *Peer Review*, Spring, 16-19.

Webber, R. (2002). The Impact of Economic Liberalism on Australian Academics' Research Activities, *Just Policy, 27* (August), 29-37.

Westfall, J. M., VanVorst, R. F., Main, D. S., & Herbert, C. (2006). Community-based participatory research in practice-based research networks, *Annals of Family Medicine, 4*, 8-14.

Whelan, J. (2003). *Are academics irrelevant? Case studies of collaborative research with community-based environmental advocates*, Paper presented at Inside Out Conference 'Charting Uncertainty: Capital, Community and Citizenship', Ipswich, Australia.

# A Woman's Perspective on Growing Engagement through 'Common-unity'

**Jan d'Ambrosio Strom (jan.strom@scu.edu.au)**
Office of Regional Engagement
Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour NSW Australia 2450

**Abstract**

The Dalai Lama (1994) speaks of interconnectedness and the notion that it is incumbent upon each of us to share our skills and knowledge with others. These ideas have much in common with 'engagement'. Engagement is not a simple or formulaic activity, but a complex mix of inter-related, multi-level, holistic and interdependent activities. Engagement can enhance the wellbeing of our communities from human, social, environmental and/or economic perspectives and contribute to community – in all its guises – through common-unity. Communities are not homogenous. They can be defined geographically, socially, culturally, spiritually, economically or otherwise. They comprise varieties of human kinds who can be members of multiple communities that are "en-meshed [with] in an even larger system – the community, the state and so on" (Berreby, 2006, p.257). This complex web of systems, and sub-systems could be viewed as tribes. From an engagement perspective this could create a conundrum – or conflict – as human kinds may be required to choose the membership of one tribe to dominate over another. Therefore recognising and building upon the 'common-unity' that exists between individual human kinds and tribes is a key engagement strategy. Common-unity encourages a focus upon linkages and connections, and the elements that unite, rather than those that divide. This dovetails with the feminine propensity to use 'web thinking', as identified by Fisher (1999) that looks at problems contextually by focusing upon the whole rather than the constituent parts. This natural ability could provide women with an opportunity to take the lead on engagement within our communities.

## Introduction

Imagine standing on the rooftop of Australia as snowflakes fall softly around, a vast blanket of sameness connects the diverse and varied landscape of alpine grasses, shrubs, rocks and trees. Each connected to the other by countless millions of snowflakes, demonstrating the 'common-unity' of this environment joined by a blanket of snowflakes. Now look at the nano-image photograph of the snowflake pictured below. It shows in detail the complexity of the six-branched faceted pattern that is unique to this particular snowflake.

Figure 1: Snowflake (Source: Libbrecht, 1999)

These images, depict two perspectives of the same thing, that has synergy with Ealy's (1995) spiral logic. Spiral logic is a holistic, creative and feminine concept that provides the opportunity to examine the old from a new perspective, that is, from a new point on the spiral.

Holistic processes enable the whole picture to be seen first, with the detail sorted out second. "Holistic thinking is natural for most women, while linear thinking is natural for most men – although both sexes are certainly capable of using each type. Since nature never created waste, holistic and linear thinking exist to balance each other. One is not better than the other" (Ealy, p. 19). As physicist Libbrecht (1999) seeks to better understand the "nonlinear nonequilibrium systems" that create each snowflake; this paper seeks to better understand the connection between engagement and common-unity by embracing spiral logic and the Socratean philosophy of encouraging dialogue that gives voice to all viewpoints.

## Understanding engagement

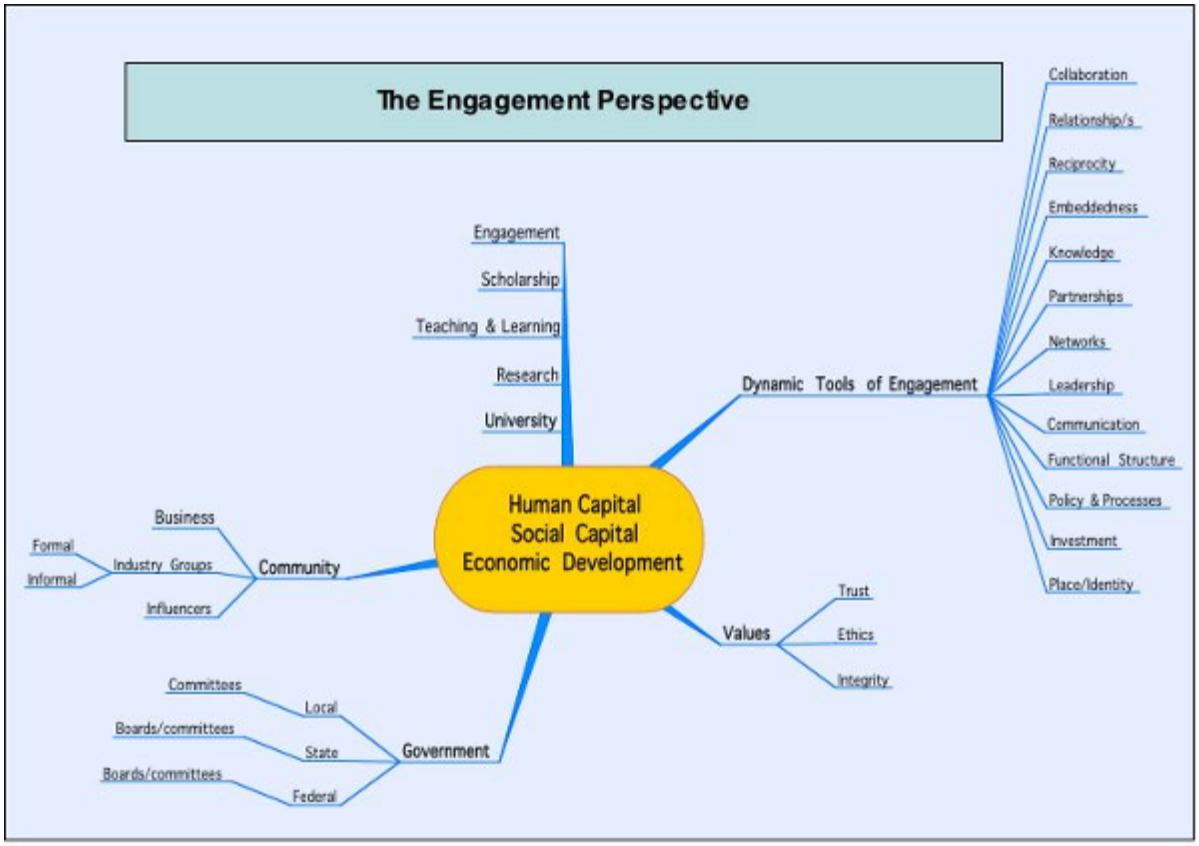
Engagement is about the discovery of shared meaning, rather than the continuation of an adversarial approach that destroys the other persons point of view and defends ones own point of view to the virtual exclusion of all others (Zohar & Marshall, 1993). This discovery reveals connectivity, builds trust and allows relationships to develop to provide 'engagers' with the opportunity to creatively challenge the status quo and be agents for change.

Engagement cannot be a one-sided relationship and

‘The Engagement Perspective’ model was developed to demonstrate the key elements of engagement with communities, government and universities as the key protagonists. It is a ‘snapshot’ and one representation that seeks to characterise the complex mix of the inter-related, multi-level, holistic and interdependent elements and sub-elements that contribute to engagement. These interdependent elements do not happen in isolation from each other, they may be synchronistic, run in parallel, or overlap each other.

The ‘Engagement Perspective’ builds upon Garlick’s (2001) theory that community growth occurs in three distinct, but not mutually exclusive, ways. Firstly through the development of *human capital*, being the people and the work related skill sets they bring. Secondly by building upon and enriching the *social capital*, that enables community cohesion; and finally through the development of *economic capital*, that generates employment, investment and income generation. Strong engagement practices work best when they are under underpinned by shared values (Lang, 2004) and the list of the ‘tools of engagement’ in Figure 2 is by no means exhaustive. Therefore the growth of human and social capital and economic development activities could also be seen as a means of building ‘common-unity’. However in order to achieve this, a ‘whole-of-community’ focus needs to be embraced, and integrated into the psyche of the people, and the organisations they reside within. Women’s holistic approaches could provide an important facilitation role, because according to Healy (2005) many organisations are still “institutionally driven, to suit their own needs rather than focusing on being in real partnerships with the communities they inhabit”. As we face greater uncertainty and change, the need for collaboration both formal and informal, will grow and with it the need to better understand connectedness. However Abbey (1997,) argues that this is not about a quest for unity, but a matter of respecting multiple viewpoints by not only respecting "the differences among individuals and groups, but also [respecting] the conflicting loyalties and claims that make a call upon the individual".

Figure 2: The Engagement Perspective




(Source: Strom (2005)

## Connectedness

The notion of 'connectedness' has wide support including: Bohm (2003), Garlick (2001), and Gibbons (2005). According to Bohm (2003) "the universal inter-connection of things has long been so evident from empirical evidence that one can no longer even question it". He further argues that it is not inconceivable that something we believe categorically today could well be proved wrong tomorrow, in the light on new information.

This challenges the old Newtonian view of physics and the material world that is based upon an ***either/or*** way of thinking, and no longer relevant in a rapidly changing global world. In the 21st century there are multiple ways of doing and being, which provide strong argument for embracing the quantum physics ***both/and*** way of thinking, and known as the Principle of Complementarity (Zohar & Marshall, 1993). This principle supports the concept of duality, whereby more than one perspective is simultaneously and equally relevant. Such duality also supports and exemplifies a sense of connectedness and the role that web-thinking could play.

### Web-thinking

According to Fisher (1999, p. 10) there is a genetic reason for women and men's different ways of thinking. Women have "a gene or a cluster of genes on the X chromosone that influences the prefrontal cortex". This gene gives 50% of women an advantage when it comes to understanding or interpreting the nuances of social interactions. It also allows them to remain mentally flexible, tolerate ambiguity and make connections between inter-related facts, and this is the basis of web-thinking.

Fisher (1999) says this style of thinking has its origin with women's primordial occupation of multi-tasking, as they fed, nurtured, nursed, disciplined and protected the young, while the men were single-tasking as they hunted for wild beast. Women's ability to utilise web-thinking is further enhanced because they enjoy making lateral connections or linkages to others, and this can greatly enhance their engagement activity within communities.

Table 1: Key Differences in Ways of Thinking

| Women | Men |
|---|---|
| Web-thinking | Step thinking |
| Emphasis on whole | Focus on the parts |
| Multitasking | Single-tasking |

(Source: Fisher 1999)

## Communities

Understanding the nature and definition of 'community' or communities is complex and cannot be defined in absolute terms. Mason (2000) states that 'community' can take many forms. It could be an 'accidental association' of people who live in a particular locale; a group connected through business interests; or others who "share a range of values, a way of life … and recognise each other as members of that group [or community]'. While the ASEA Foundation (2001), state that communities can have formal and/or informal social structures, be geographically situated and characterised by financial and economic structures, diversity by age, gender, culture, profession, and religion. In order to function effectively Kanter (1995) argues that communities need to have both '*magnets*' and '*glue*'. Magnets broaden community horizons, attract and expand skills and attract external resources; and the glue, brings people together in social cohesion, with joint plans, and agreed strategies that benefit all. Women, with their propensity to connectedness and web-thinking can, and do, engage on an intra-community and inter-community basis to provide 'community glue'.

However, Bourdieu (2005) cautions that the patriarchal dominance of many cultures has had, and continues to have, a significant affect upon our communities, because it is heavily ingrained or en-culturised. The dominance "is incorporated into our minds … and we act in the world according to this structure and by doing so tend to contribute to reproduce this system" (Bourdieu, p. 47). However, he argues that 'misfits', those people who question and challenge the status quo, can create a dynamic friction that can sometimes result in a re-shaping of community.

As there is no singular view of community, linear 'one size fits all' solutions cannot be applied from one community to another. Thus women's holistic and spiral logic approach, that responds to each new situation; is informed by other situations; and continually expands and transforms to suit changing circumstances, could add greatly to building the social and human capital of our communities and sub-communities or tribes.

## Tribes

Tribes cannot be seen in isolation, the complexity of tribal systems and sub-systems, are "en-meshed in an even larger system - the community, the state and so on" (Berreby, 2006, p. 247). Tribalism, from an individual perspective, has many layers that can also be described as 'human kinds'. Berreby states it is this sense of 'human kinds' that guides us to behave in ways that are situation appropriate and have been 'coded' in our brains in response to our previous learned experience.

For example a woman may be a member of a number of 'human kinds' or tribes. She may be a worker, a

mother, a partner, and a community volunteer. Her membership of the 'worker tribe' may be subject to hierarchical structures. In turn she may be a member of a work related sub-tribe, such as a 'management-tribe' or 'union-tribe'. Each tribe or sub-tribe will be subject to many rules and expectations, some formal and others informal**.** In addition to these imposed tribes, human beings are attracted to self-selected friendship tribes where they may also establish formal and informal networks, alliances or coalitions on a needs basis; which adds to the complexity. Their tribal memberships also impacts upon their view of 'human-kind' and as such reminds us "we are all members of overlapping human kinds" (Berreby, 2006, p. 192). Such overlapping can create a conundrum, as it will inevitably require a human being to choose the membership of one tribe to dominate over another.

So, from a tribal perspective, how difficult is it for people to 'engage' with those who are not members of their (primary or dominant) 'human kind'? It seems evident that some modern tribes are having immense difficulty engaging with 'non-like others' that is having a profound global affect as many ethnic and religious groups in particular, are growing in power. According to Berreby (2006) such tribal growth often results in a shift away from the power of the nation states. Fisher (1999) suggests that some of societies 'most vexing ills' could be solved by the power of women, because of their natural inclination towards interconnectedness and their tendency for holistic web thinking, coupled with their people skills and compassion.

Humans are clearly members of multiple tribes, or human-kinds that interact with and influence each other. Therefore 'tribal' members will have to consciously step outside of their traditional tribal confines to connect with and respond to others by exchanging ideas and information. Women may be able to provide a style of leadership that encourages such stepping out to create a climate of common-unity.

## Common-unity

Common-unity could be built by developing community spirit, interaction, trust and a 'sense of belonging'. Livingstone (2002) believes that cultivating a 'sense of belonging' within a community works because the participants have a vested interest in the future of their community and are generally more willing to work together to make their community a better place. The notion of 'common-unity' aligns with Levine and White (1980) who argue that few organisations have the capacity to achieve in isolation, therefore the 'en-meshing' and establishment of relationships between organisations within a particular community, can assist each 'player', to better achieve their respective goals and objectives. Therefore engagement, connection and a holistic approach to relationship have a flow-on affect upon relationships that should not be ignored. The idea of common-unity also has relevance from an economic perspective, as Polanyi (1944, p. 163) states that "to separate labour from other activities of life and then subject it to the laws of the market was to annihilate all organic forms of existence and replace them by a different type of organisation, an atomistic and individualistic one".

From an organisational viewpoint, the idea that a policy of establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) between two organisations can ensure the embedding of common-unity has some merit, but could also be seen as being naïve. Zohar & Marshall (1993) argues that forcing such an agreement could repel participation, both internally and externally, because people need the chance to learn to be together. Kanter (1995) suggests it is important to move beyond professional niceties, in terms of contract and finance for example, in order to determine if the two organisations share similar values, philosophies and management styles. Additionally formal agreements cannot anticipate everything, because interpretation can vary according to customs, particularly intercultural. Therefore it would seem unlikely that a sense of common-unity or engagement can be established via an MOU. Relationships are better if built through joint activity, such as cross-investment, the sharing of human and physical infrastructure, or by identifying common goals.

## Conclusion

The elements that have been identified as enabling common-unity form a 'dynamic spiral of common-unity' that could be depicted thus.

Figure 3: The Dynamic Spiral of 'Common-unity'.
Adapted from: www.spiraldynamics.org spiral diagram.

The key interactive elements explored are the recognition and acceptance of different perspectives,

multiple viewpoints, holism, web-thinking, connectedness and 'both/and' ways of thinking. As the elements work together, with each influencing and being influenced by the others, engagement is enabled. "With their people skills, their language abilities, their drive to network, and their faculty for contextual thinking, women will be extremely valuable human capital … [because] they enjoy making lateral connections to others and working in less formal and less hierarchical settings" (Fisher 1999) Consequently, because more than 50% of women have a natural propensity toward this contextual style of thinking, women are well placed to be the *enablers of common-unity* across the breadth and depth of our global 'community'.

## References


Abbey, R. (1997). More perspectives on communitarianism,. *AQ, 69*(2), 72-83.

ASEA Foundation. (2001). People make it work: The social fabric of community on the web. *Community as strategy*.

Berreby, D. (2006). *Us and them: Understanding your tribal mind*. London: Hutchinson.

Bohm, D. (2003). *Essential David Bohm*. Retrieved 11 August 2006.

Bourdieu, P. (2005). Habitus. In J. Hillier & E. Rookesby (Eds.), *Habitus: A sense of place* (2nd ed., pp. 43-49). London: Ashgate.

Ealy, J. (1995). *The woman's book of creativity*: Canada: Celestial Arts.

Fisher, H. (1999). *The first sex: The natural talents of woman and how they are changing the world.* Melbourne: Random House.

Garlick, S. (2001). *Universities and their regions: Engaging knowledge for regional economic development.* Unpublished PhD, Southern Cross University, Lismore.

Gibbons, M. (2005). *Engagement with the community: the emergence of a new social contract between society and science*. Griffith University Community Engagement Workshop. South Bank, QLD: Griffith University.

Healy, G. (2005, Wednesday 27 July, 2005). Connecting with community. *Campus Review,* p. 8.

Kanter, R. M. (1995). *World class*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Lama, D. (1994). *The way to freedom*. London: Harper Collins.

Lang, J. C. (2004). Social context and social capital as enablers of knowledge integration. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 8*(3), 89-105.

Levine, S., & White, P. E. (1980). Exchange as a conceptual framework for the study of interorganisational relationships. In A. Etzioni & E. W. Lehman (Eds.), *A sociological reader on complex organisations* (3rd ed., pp. 256-268). USA: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Libbrecht, K. (1999). *Field guide to snowflakes* Retrieved 2 August 2007.

Livingstone, L. (2002). *Belonging - a model for community building consultation - Marrackville Council.* Paper presented at the IAP2 Conference "Community consultation - building democracy or manufacturing compliance". Sydney.

Polanyi, K. (1944). *The great transformation*: Boston: Beacon Press.

Strom, J. (2005). *The engagement perspective.* Paper presented at the CRUX, Southern Cross University, Lismore.

Zohar, D., & Marshall, I. (1993). *The quantum society: Mind, physics and a new social vision*. London: Bloomsbury.

# Assessing Viability for Starting Business

**Wai Sue Teoh (visionarygroup@tpg.com.au)**
Visionarygroup

**Michael W. Gardiner (gardiner@usq.edu.au)**
School of Management and Marketing
University of Southern Queensland, Springfield QLD 4300 Australia

**Abstract**

Owning a business, becoming a boss is the dream of most employees, but not all are living this dream. Traditionally, new business advisers focus on hard components of planning including marketing; financial and legal aspects; aligning the idea with the business opportunity and the possible markets. Although it is essential to understand this hard side of starting a business, it is equally important to appreciate the soft side (of starting a business) by recognising and appreciating the motives, values and drives a potential entrepreneur has to offer. This paper considers the question – is entrepreneurship the right path for a given individual?

## Introduction

Many employees would like to be their own boss, believing that this will allow them to have greater flexibility, improved personal and financial freedom and control of their lives, while emotionally reaching a sense of self-actualisation.

In Australia over the period 2003 and 2004, 11.2% of all actively trading businesses are Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) business start-ups (Australia Bureau Statistic, 2005). Small business contributes one-third of Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and accounts for 96% of all business in private sector (excluding agriculture) (Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee, 2003).

Traditionally, when planning to start a business the first step is to develop a business plan focusing on marketing, financial and legal aspects while considering the business idea and assessing the qualification and skills needed for the new business venture (business.gov.au 2007; Frederick, Kuratko, & Hodgetts, 2007; Katz & Green, 2007; Schaper & Volery, 2004; State of Queensland, 2007).

This paper addresses the issue "Is entrepreneurship the right path for a given individual?" and in doing so limits the term entrepreneur to those persons being entrepreneurial outside of an existing organisation (Schaper & Volery, 2004). The structure of the paper explores and addresses the hard and soft sides of business and entrepreneurial start-ups. It starts by acknowledging the need for marketing, financial, legal, IT and human resource planning. But equally or of greater importance (Reynolds, Williams, & Savage, 2000) discusses the soft side of business ownership such as; the drive, motivation, personality, lifestyle, and ability to handle stress of the individual; and the impact of their personal and business networks.

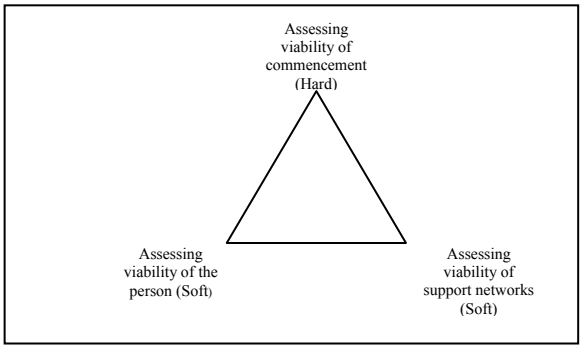



Figure 1: Three viability tests

To review these dimensions viability of the business venture are considered from three dimensions (See figure 1):

- Assessing viability of commencement (Hard)
- Assessing viability of person (Soft)
- Assessing viability of support network (Soft)

These three assessments will now be discussed in turn.

## Assessing Viability of Commencement (Hard)

The initiative to start a business is often germinated by one's thought - a brilliant and unique business idea, or it can be recognition of the need for a good or service offering, or the way the business is promoted. The idea can be derived from many channels, either from one's experience in a given field or industry, taking advantage of a growing business trend, or venturing something new. In the end the motive is to be the boss and in control, personally and moreover, financially.

Accordingly, the entrepreneur looks to the first test of viability, which involves the hard dimensions of marketing, finance and legal issue. Often the first step necessitates research of the industry within which they intend to develop their business, and is limited to best practices and the disciplines of marketing, finance, and law. Other business disciplinary areas are important such as human resources and information technology, but these receive consideration once the market, financial and legal deliberations determine the business venture as viable (Reynolds et al., 2000). The

practicability and appropriateness of this research conducted by a person new to business ventures is beyond the scope of this paper, but often these people are unskilled in at least one of these three disciplinary areas and a take a cursory approach to the research. However, detailed information is needed when often surface information is collated (Department State Development- Queensland, 2007).

Having conducted the research the information is interrogated in relation to the three areas of marketing finance and law to determine the viability of the venture.

From a marketing perspective, one needs to consider if the business idea will work by observing the industry, and deciding if the industry is growing and has enough capacity to accommodate this new business venture. Too little sales and too much competition is the cause of almost 50% of business failure (Reynolds et al., 2000). Every business has its market. Thus, identifying and understanding the market needs and characteristics are important, as is the matching of those needs and characteristics to the business idea or opportunity. Having identified the market, the process of managing, Product, Price, Place and Promotion (4Ps) can be developed, where the right product package is offered to the market at the right price, with the right distribution and logistical attributes and finalising the mix with relevant and integrated marketing communication.

Equally, every business needs income. Often while planning to start a business, one needs to look at the start-up cost, ongoing fixed and variable costs along with projected sales to get the needed cash flow and break-even points. Traditionally, this is considered as the most important aspect in starting business as the ultimate goal of business is often identified as bringing in money to gain financial freedom. As this is an important area that calls for finance skill professional help is called for because on top of the above analysis of the business's viability, the business financial structure needs to be considered, as does the taxation and superannuation regime (QuickOverview.com, 2007; State of Queensland, 2007).

The third traditional component is legal. In starting a business, the structure of the business needs to be considered: sole trader, partnership or company. Each of these options has its advantages and disadvantages and will affect how the business is conducted. Business can also be setup by either purchasing a business, buying a franchise or starting from scratch. All options have different legal requirements. In addition, the business name, trademark, and trading contracts need to be researched and resolved. Again, this area calls for professional advice.

The entrepreneur now has researched and considered the hard aspects for determining viability for the commencement of the business, but there is another side of the business start-up that must be considered. This is the soft side of starting business.

## Assessing Viability of Person (Soft)

Before going on to detailed planning and implementation of the start-up, perhaps the most vital consideration one must meet is the move from a traditional corporate career and all it entails to that of an entrepreneurial career and all it needs (Frederick et al., 2007).

The following key areas provide a framework for the entrepreneur to explore the move to an entrepreneurial career. First, assess the essential qualifications, skills and interests needed for the entrepreneurial venture. Second, assess the motives and values for the career move. Third, resolve if one is willing to accept the challenges that will be presented. Fourth, identify the challenges in life cycle of a business. These four key areas will now be expanded.

Identifying the necessary qualifications, skills and interests is necessary because as an entrepreneur, one needs to oversee the entire business. Although help is available from professionals, the entrepreneur needs to have basic skills in the areas like marketing and sales, financial management, operations and administration, human resources, and general management. Reviewing one's qualifications, skills and interest will help to identify necessary training. More than 60% of business failure is due to lack of business or management experience, skills and ability (Reynolds et al., 2000).

Besides the qualifications, skills and interest, the motives and values of the individual play an important role in deciding if an entrepreneurial career is the right path. This new owner needs to understand their drive for running a business and recognise how running a business will test and affect their personal and work values for the next three to five years. It also requires them to consider how they will run their business and what risks (social, legal, and financial) they are willing to accept to achieve their lifestyle goals. This is a key process because often one focuses on the exciting side of the new venture and fails to, or avoids facing the mundane, best practice process side of entrepreneurial activities. When one is on the journey of entrepreneurship, there are many uncertainties. A clear appreciation of the motives for starting the business will help point a clear direction and serve as a good reminder when the journey is difficult. Clearly defining the motivation for the venture will provide a source of energy to face challenges (Howto Lifehack, 2007). In the business world, unfairness, tricks and manipulation do occur and this may be against the entrepreneur's personal values, if the career change is chosen. Acknowledging events that are counter to one's own personal values and developing ways to deal with them is vital.

The next area is to look inward and have a reality check. Although being one's own boss is appealing and

the business idea seems to be innovative and workable, an entrepreneurial career is different to a corporate career. In a corporate career, if one dislikes the working environment or the job profile, one can choose to exit without much discomfort other than getting another job.

At start-up, it is likely that the entrepreneurial career will involve longer working hours as one cannot afford to engage employees. This calls for the entrepreneur to be hands-on in all aspects of the business. Further, the entrepreneur cannot only do the aspects of the business they like and avoid other components. An entrepreneur needs to be jack-of-all-trades, competent and diligent in all aspect of the business operation.

The change may be seen as small and exciting but the consequences of not being personally prepared can be costly emotionally, physically and financially.

Stress is a regular companion of a new entrepreneur. Stress builds quickly when early sales are low and sporadic but fixed bills are coming in every month. Stress can also be derived from fear of failure, fear of rejection, fear of loss of security, fear of other's disapproval, frustration because of things not going according to plan, a goal seems unreachable, others keep saying no, others demands keep one from doing what is desired (Torress, 2007). Stress is tiring mentally, physically and emotionally, and needs acknowledgement. Before deciding to start a business, it is important to identify the greatest fear in doing business. This will allow the entrepreneur to recognise stress in the early stage. Then when it hits, one is prepared with a remedy to combat it.

Good health is important. Before starting the business, it is important to assess one's personal health to ensure that there is stamina and energy to run the business physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Fourth, all businesses have challenges. As the business is still evolving around concepts and ideas, the challenges will change at each stages of the business start-up process. The need to visualise, identify and name these challenges at every stage will enhance clarity of the business vision and facilitate management at each stage of the process.

By identifying the challenges and anticipating the worst-case scenario, financial and personal contingency plans can be developed and, if necessary, recognise the need to enact an exit plan. By anticipating the worst-case scenario, it means that one has calculated and managed their risks.

## Assessing Viability of Support Network (Soft)

Having considered the personal aspects of entrepreneurship it is also essential to consider the impact on and by family, friends, support networks and business networks.

The decision to become an entrepreneur will affect the people around them, especially those with a dependent family. One needs to acknowledge and understand their capabilities in coping with future challenges. Specifically, family factors such as how long the current lifestyle can be maintained; are family members willing to support by adjusting their lifestyles; and how the business can be funded.

Having support from family is important, as is knowing the bounds of that support. Discussion needs to be detailed and understood by all parties so that in difficult times, the pre-agreed terms will help the family go through those challenging times.

If family is involved in the business, there are potential conflicts in management. Typical issues are salary, role and status of family members. Clarification is needed early as at start-up, payment tends to based on need, while in the business world people are paid based on their market value (Frederick et al., 2006). Furthermore, if the business is a family based business, the additional resources aid in the start-up, but with matters of management, decisions are often based on emotion and inward looking while in the business world, decisions are based on analysis and outward looking. This does create conflict, as family tend to minimise change to preserve harmony, while business needs continuous change to develop and stay competitive (Frederick et al., 2006). Understanding the potential conflicts and evaluate if one is willing to deal with these conflicts early, will help to decide the nature of business and the degree of family involvement.

Other support groups of friends and ex-colleagues, the social and professional network also play an important role in business start-up. Professional networks are often the basis of business, as they provide the first few business activities. In addition to helping give life to the start-up, the network also provides a good source of encouragement and support. However, like the family situation, reliance on the networks is temporary. An understanding of the degree and willingness of network support will be required to project the business success in the early stages. A poor entrepreneur assumes the network will indefinitely support the venture, or will support the venture when one is in difficult time (Bosch & Boeckner, 2003).

Another key person or group of people can be identified as "the centre of influence" in the selected industry. A person who is a centre of influence is an individual who is in the industry and highly respected (Leadership Management Australia, 2007). Gaining their understanding of the market and if possible their support will facilitate the first few business transactions.

The above discussion focuses on three dimensions for validating if pursuing entrepreneurial role suits one's personality, interest, values and if one has the resources to run it long term.

By going through this process, one is able to give the entrepreneurial career for a business start-up a good

review and help take the first step, by deciding to continue and explore the career change with confidence.

In conclusion, while it is important to assess the viability of the hard side of starting business, it is of more importance to address the viability of the soft side of a business start-up, the personal capabilities and traits, in association with the support from family and social and business networks.

Embarking on an entrepreneurship career is a long-term commitment, it demands many scarifies and energy. Not everyone is suitable or willing to relinquish his or her current life style to become an entrepreneur. The focus on the hard dimension of business start-ups can lead the novice entrepreneur down a path that is not suited to their person or their social and business support groups. Starting a business is a risk, before deciding to take this risk, it is better to assess all dimensions to ensure a successful transition to an entrepreneurial career.

## Acknowledgements

Lee Hecht Harrison *The Road to Entrepreneurship* n.d.

## References

Australia Bureau Statistic (2003). *Entries and exits of business entities 2003-2004.* Cat. 8160.055.001.

Frederick, H., Kuratko, D. & Hodgetts, R. (2006). *Entrepreneurship: Theory process practice.* Thomson.

business.gov.au. (2007). *What do I need before I get started?* http://business.gov.au .

Bosch, K., & Boeckner, L. ( 2003). *Coping in stressful times during drought.* University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Department of State Development Queensland Government (2007). *Doing research.* http://www.sd.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v3/guis/templates/content/gui_cue_cntnhtml.cfm?id=32).

Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee (2003). *Small business employment*. http://www.aph.gov.au/SENATE/committee/eet_ctte/completed_inquiries/2002-04/smallbus_employ/report/c01.pdf.

Howto Lifehack. (2007). *Motivation.* http://howto.lifehack.org/wiki/Motivation.

Torres, C. (2007). *Stress survival tips.* http://www.coffeeworksdesign.com/articles/stress_survival.html

Katz, J., & Green, R. (2007). *Entrepreneurial small business.* McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Leadership Management Australia (2007). *Effective Selling.* LMA.

QuickOverview.com (2007). *Starting a business*. http://www.quickoverview.com/finance/starting-a-business.html.

Reynolds, W., Williams, A., & Savage, W. (2000). *Your own business – A practical guide to success.* Thomson.

Schaper, M., & Volery, T. (2004). *Entrepreneurship and small business- A Pacific rim perspective.* Wiley.

State of Queensland. (2007). *7 steps to business success*. http://www.sd.qld.gov.au/dsdweb/v3/guis/templates/content/gui_cue_cntnhtml.cfm?id=500.

# Quo vadis: Transplanting Lives of South African Women Settling in Australia

**Henriette M. Janse van Rensburg (vanrensb@usq.edu.au)**
**Anikó Hatoss (hatoss@usq.edu.au)**
Faculty of Education
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

This paper reports the findings of a study which explored the emerging difficulties South African women experience while settling in Australia. The aim of the study was to discover whether (and how) South African women maintain their cultural heritage and whether they transmit it to the next generation; how they balance their identity and make cultural adjustments to acculturate in a new country; and how they manage communication difficulties that arise from being speakers of English as a Second Language (ESL). By examining survey and interview data, the paper discusses the complex issue of maintaining a home culture while embracing a new. As one woman explains, *"I will always be a South African. I doubt whether I will ever be a "true blue" Aussie, as there are some cultural aspects connected to the term. I try to acquire the new culture wherever possible…will probably always be a South African Aussie…"* Two main themes of the study are discussed in this paper: (1) What attitudes do South African immigrant women have towards their cultural and language heritage and the maintenance of this heritage in Australia?; and (2) How do they reshape their identities as South African Australian women? In this paper it is argued that "transplanting lives" in a new country might be viewed as having three layers of an immigrant's life: 'uprooting', 'transplanting' and 'preserving'.

## Introduction

The study of immigrant communities and their adjustment to a new country with new sets of social and cultural norms has been the subject of much research. This adjustment process has been shown to have numerous social, psychological and cultural challenges (see e.g., Sonderegger, Barrett, & Creed, 2004). Landale and Oropesa (2002) maintain that the construction of a racial and ethnic identity is an ongoing process that involves negotiation between an individual and others. They argue that "self-definitions shift over time and across social contexts" (Landale & Oropesa, p. 2). They suggest that this means that immigrants' identities are flexible, and a change of identity is partly driven by the individual's choices and attitudes, and partly driven by the outside environment. This paper is about South African women in Australia. Since the South African community is growing rapidly, this paper is very timely and relevant to contemporary multicultural Australia.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2003), on census day in 2006, the resident population of Australia was projected to be 21,027,803. People born in South Africa form the fourth largest group of settler arrivals (29,000 people). Over the last 10 years, their numbers in Australia have increased by 48%. In 2006, people born in Iraq and South Africa represented the fastest-growing immigrant groups in Australia. The majority (86%) of South African settlers arrive as part of the Skilled Migration Program. As a result, most South African-born females living in Australia are well-educated, with the 2001 Census results showing that 36% of South Africa-born residents held a higher degree, postgraduate diploma, bachelor degree, undergraduate degree or associate diploma, while only 17% of the total Australian resident population held one of these qualifications. The main driving force for this migration trend is that South Africa's political history throughout the last two decades has been turbulent with the application of international sanctions, political reforms and the eventual dismantling of apartheid. In June 1998, 70,800 South Africa-born persons were residents in Australia, representing 0.4 % of the total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics).

While a number of studies have addressed language and culture maintenance in immigrant communities in Australia (Clyne & Kipp, 2000), there is relatively little focus on women in migration situations and the difficulties they face. There appears to be an immediate strong need to conduct empirically-based studies in immigrant communities about how they ensure that their heritage culture and language are not lost in the environment of the new country. There is also a clear need to develop our understanding of immigrant communities' awareness of their language issues and their attitudes to the languages they use in everyday communication and in education.

The adjustment of an immigrant group often goes in hand with language shift. Language shift (Clyne & Kipp, 2000) refers to a process of a gradual shift from the use of mother tongue to the use of the dominant language of the host society. Language maintenance can be considered as the other end of the continuum (Clyne & Kipp, 2000) as it refers to the successful maintenance of an immigrant language over generations. Since women may be traditionally sees as being responsible for teaching the "mother tongue" to

their children, the language maintenance prospects of immigrant communities are largely dependent on women's attitudes to and motivations for transmitting their language and culture to the next generation. Therefore, women play a crucial role in the adjustment of immigrant families and the maintenance of immigrant languages.

This paper addresses the role of women in the South African community. The paper presents some results from a study that investigated the emerging difficulties experienced by South African women who recently migrated to Australia, as they try to maintain their cultural identity. A survey, as well as interviews of a small sample of participants, formed the basis of this study. The research questions that guided the study were as follows:

1. What activities are South African women involved in which help them maintain their first culture and their mother tongue?
2. Which factors impede their culture and language learning in Australia?

## The study

The study was set in a regional Australian community where recently a large number of South African families settled. The major innovative characteristic of this project was that it explored women's strategies for cultural and language maintenance in an Australian regional settlement. The study contributes to our understanding of how immigrant families, especially women, adjust to a new country and what cross-cultural attitudes they develop in the new environment. The outcomes of this study identify factors that impede the development of successful acculturation strategies in immigrant communities.

## Method

The study explored the complex issue of maintaining an immigrant culture while embracing the new host culture through a survey and a semi-structured interview collected from 17 families including 54 individuals. The approach was a unique combination of sociolinguistics and educational research. Traditionally, in sociolinguistics, researchers "take a broad view focussing on communities, and employing quantificational and ethnographic methods" (Clyne, 2001). This study used a combination of approaches including elements of the well established domain analysis, social network analysis, ethnography, and self-reported language choice and motivation. The exploratory survey aimed to collect background data on migration history, family profile, language use in family and other domains, language preference, language dominance, language proficiency, language attitudes and ethnic identity. The survey data were processed by using SPSS data editor and they were analysed using descriptive statistical methods. The in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in parallel with the survey to elicit qualitative data around a number of focal questions.

The approach to sampling in this project was driven by four main considerations: Participants had to (1) be of South African background; (2) be Afrikaans-speaking; (3) have school-aged children older than 10 years, and (4) have been locally settled in the new community within the past 9 years (but have been settled for at least 1 year). Since the project did not aim to draw accurate population parameters, but aimed to collect 'cultural' data, non-probability purposeful sampling was used to select participants (Amara & Mar?i, 2002).

Families were selected and approached through the local South African Club with help from the club secretary. This approach had the potential limitation of not reaching those families which did not have contacts with the South African Club. However, this strategy can be justified as it is fair to say that in Australia most South African families "transplanted" successfully and do not live in isolation from the community. Australia is a popular destination for South Africans, because of the high standard of living, excellent health and education systems, similar climate, political and economic stability (Migration Expert, 2002). The Australian Migration Program creates opportunities for suitably qualified professional and tradespersons.

Families were asked to complete a survey. The quantitative data (from the survey) in this study were subsidiary to the qualitative in-depth interview data. The survey incorporated the following sections: language use, language proficiencies, language preference, social contact with peers and links with home country, use of Internet for community activities locally and beyond, language attitudes, and use of computer mediated communication for language maintenance. The survey was piloted with 5 South African individuals of various age groups.

The 17 South African families were interviewed for in-depth qualitative data. One hour semi-structured interviews were conducted in the participants' first language, Afrikaans. The interview schedule elicited free speech according to the main themes: migration history; language use and proficiency; attitudes to Afrikaans and English, and motivation to use and maintain Afrikaans. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The interviews were allowed to develop relatively freely according to the participants' observations and experiences.

## Research Findings

This paper reports some of the findings elicited from 27 female participants. In this sub-group, the average age of adult participants was 41 and the average age for their daughters was 16. Twenty four participants (89%) were born in South Africa and three (11%) in Namibia. Six adult participants were working in the educational field, while four were in the medical field, four were housewives, one worked in marketing and one in law. The majority, therefore, were well-trained and well-educated professionals.

The following section describes strategies that South African women implement in the regional Australian community in order to maintain their cultural heritage. A survey question asked participants to comment on the importance of social contacts and cultural adjustments in Australia. In a response to a question about *the importance of South African community programs*, 40.7% of the women regarded it as of medium importance and 22.2% as not important at all. Table 1 summarises responses to this question.

Table 1: Importance of SA community programs

| | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| not important at all | 6 | 22.2 |
| somewhat important | 2 | 7.4 |
| of medium importance | 11 | 40.7 |
| important | 6 | 22.2 |
| very important | 2 | 7.5 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 |

Respondents' comments support these accounts:

*We enjoy attending South African club activities, the socialising with other people who have a lot in common with ourselves and to do things together, like attending Afrikaans church – to sing together.*

*Soon after our arrival we made contact with other ex South Africans and definitely felt more at home. It helped us with adjusting to life in Australia.*

*We love it. We often camp together, visit Afrikaans shops. We like to help new South Africans when they come into town to settle in into all aspects of life.*

*We definitely attend club activities as far as possible. We have the same background, understand the same jokes. The Australian humour is different to that of South Africa. We are able to express ourselves and understand each other with ease. Afrikaans is a very expressive language, describing and there is a sense of humour specifically related to the language.*

Participants described South African culture as old fashioned, strict, with high moral standards and strongly imbedded Dutch Reformed Christian values. In their views, in South Africa, a strong emphasis was placed on people's financial status and materialism. Participants expressed their views of the differences between South African and Australian culture with the following words:

*Many Australians live together with their partners, they are spoilt and don't realise the privileges that they have in their country. We feel that they are less strict and [more] laid back. Wealth is not everything. Cross cultural relationships are common.*

*The culture is 100% different. The majority of South Africans are raised in Christian homes and blasphemy is not common. The food is different, South African food is more spicy and salty. South African women feel very strongly about their personal appearance.*

*Afrikaans people understand the culture; my stories and many of my jokes are directly linked to the culture. Australians do not understand South African humour and jokes. It is just so much easier to express yourself in Afrikaans.*

South African women expressed a strong link between their culture, their language, traditions and their identity. They were of the view that if culture was not constantly maintained and practised, it would be lost. Forty percent (40%) of the women commented that it was very important for them to keep their South African traditions. One participant described this feeling as follows:

*Yes it is important for us to make contact in Afrikaans and keep our traditions. It is good to socialise in your mother tongue around a "braaivleis", as there is a difference between a "braaivleis" and a "barbie". If we have a "braaivleis", we would sit around an open fire and eat "boerewors"(beef sausage) , "pap"(a traditional grain dish).*

From the interviews it was evident that respondents wanted to keep their South African identity. Thirty-seven percent felt that it was very important; 33.3% important; 18.5% of medium importance and 11.1% somewhat important. The majority (81.5%) still listen to Afrikaans music – 22.2% daily, 37% weekly and 22.2% on a monthly basis. Although they are proud of their Afrikaans background, it is of medium importance to let people know that they are Afrikaans.

Table 2: Letting people know that I am Afrikaans

| | Frequency | % |
|---|---|---|
| not important at all | 2 | 7.4 |
| somewhat important | 3 | 11.1 |
| of medium importance | 13 | 48.1 |
| important | 5 | 18.6 |
| very important | 4 | 14.8 |
| Total | 27 | 100.0 |

South African woman make cultural adjustments to assimilate in their new country. Here are a few

responses to the question of whether they see themselves as South African or Australian:

*I see myself as South African-Australian. I think if you're born in another country and you have a different mother tongue, it is difficult to become 100% Australian, but I have no problem socialising with Australians…..actually, when we first came over we barely had any knowledge of Australian history and culture and found it difficult to converse on this subject. With time, we have become acquainted with political issues and local celebrities. We are proud of the fact that we can now give an informed opinion.*

*In our hearts we are still "Afrikaners", but in our heads we are Australian. We will never be true blue Aussies and maybe not even our children, only their children.*

*Although we are now Australian citizens, I don't think it is possible for us, born and lived in South Africa for a big part or our lives to now suddenly see ourselves as real Australians.*

An important question was to explore the social networks that South African immigrants develop. Table 3 shows the summary of responses to the question: "How important is it for you to have Australian and South African friends?"

Table 3: Importance of South African or Australian friends

| Importance | South African friends % | Australian friends % |
|---|---|---|
| Not at all | 3.7 | 0 |
| Somewhat | 7.4 | 7.4 |
| Medium | 14.8 | 14.8 |
| Important | 18.5 | 18.5 |
| Very | 55.6 | 59.3 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

Migrating to, and acculturation into a new country is not an easy process. South African woman experience many difficulties while trying to grow after resettlement. Most difficulties are work, family, and language related. Participants illustrated the most challenging hitches as:

*I had to write exams before I was able to practice in Australia. At times it put pressure on my family life*

*The Australian people are very friendly, but even people that have been here for an extended time find it difficult to make Aussie friends. We still feel like immigrants.*

*I feel uncomfortable speaking English with an accent. I think the children find it more difficult as they want to blend in and be part of the Australian society, they don't want to stand out as a foreigner.*

*I experience problems with the Maths terminology which is totally different from the Afrikaans terminology*

*I am quiet in Australian company as I find that they have difficulty in understanding me. When I applied for work, I felt that my accent had a negative effect on my application.*

*In teaching I find that the accent is not a problem, but as an immigrant, you have to prove yourself.*

The participants expressed their desire to be like other Australians. They did not want to be seen as immigrants. The following response summarises their common feelings:

*I would prefer it if I could speak like the Australian people because I want to blend in. On the other hand, many Australian people have complimented me on my accent. I would still prefer not to be noticed for my accent. It would be so good just to be accepted as an Australian.*

Respondents accepted the fact they would gradually lose their identity after uplifting their roots and being "transplanted" in a new country. They will never divest themselves of their cultural baggage. The following comments support these accounts:

*You will eventually lose your identity and the South African way of life. All you have left over here is your language; your friends become your family as your real family is still in South Africa.*

*Our children play in "English", not Afrikaans. We want our children to see how Australians are and how they go out of their way to help new South Africans into Aussie life.*

*You will loose both your identity as well as your culture. Afrikaans identifies you and people notice through your accent that you're not from Australia. Culture is something you give up voluntarily. You cannot run away from who you are; it will make you a deprived individual.*

*We are Australian citizens now, but I doubt whether we will ever be" true blue" Aussies, as there are some cultural aspects connected to the term. I try to acquire their culture wherever possible and to become a true Australian. I live here now and I want to live here. Will probably always be South African Aussie.*

Language was seen to be central to the adjustment process in a new country. The following section describes strategies that the South African participants implement in order to maintain their language heritage.

It was very important, as reported by 63% of the respondents, to speak Afrikaans in the family and community. Although all the adults indicate that they can still speak, understand, read and write Afrikaans very well, a decline is evident in the children's abilities. The children indicated that only 54.5% can still speak it very well, 63.6% understand it very well, 45.5% can read Afrikaans very well and 36.4% can write it very

well. Nine percent of the children cannot write it at all and 30% only a little. They do not use Afrikaans dictionaries anymore and struggle with Afrikaans spelling. Because their medium of instruction is English, the students feel that they can read and write better in the latter. When asked "How important is Afrikaans to you and do you think that you will lose it?", their responses were as follows*:*

*It is very important to us because we still think in Afrikaans and grew up as an Afrikaans speaking person. I can express myself so much easier. When I speak English, I basically first have to translate my thoughts.*

*I don't think that we'll lose the language; I don't even think we'll lose the accent. The younger you are when you come over, the easier you'll lose the language as the Australian culture will become your culture in your forming years. Teenagers should be able to at least understand the language.*

It is interesting to see in which language women were thinking and dreaming. More women were starting to think and dream in both languages.

Table 4: Language of thinking and dreaming

| Language | Thinking % | Dreaming % |
|---|---|---|
| Afrikaans | 40.7 | 37.0 |
| English | 22.2 | 29.6 |
| Afrikaans and English | 37.1 | 33.4 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |

Participants reported making use of electronic communication in order to maintain their Afrikaans language abilities. Fifty two percent indicated that they read online news papers, articles and magazines. They frequently send emails to their South African family and friends, communicate via mobile phones, Skype, and chat rooms. One participant reflected as follows:

I use the computer to communicate in Afrikaans by sending emails to family and friends; for my work and have lots of electronic communication with Afrikaans speaking South Africans on a daily basis. I often send text messages.

Participants seemed to have a negative attitude towards those families which have opted for not maintaining their original language and identity. They have indicated that this trend had already commenced and were doubtful whether the community would be strong enough to maintain the language in the next generation. Some participants expressed these views as follows:

We have unfortunately met people who are quite willing to leave their Afrikaans heritage behind and only speak English. In this case, the language will not survive for many years.

I like to look at the Germans and Jews and how their language survived in different countries. I believe it is because there is a strong will on their part that made it happen and it can be done with Afrikaans as well. However, I doubt if there is a strong enough will to do so.

Our children have already lost some of their Afrikaans abilities. They prefer English as all their friends are English.

## Conclusion

Respondents reported generally high levels of confidence in their ability to maintain their existing culture. They try to maintain their cultural heritage and transmit it to the next generation. It is often difficult to balance one's identity and make cultural adjustments to assimilate in a new country; and to manage communication difficulties that arise from being ESL speakers. It is evident that there are factors that impede on this maintenance. Participants accept the fact that some will be lost through generations. It is also evident that women surveyed feel sheltered by national identity and co-ethnic ties, but their daughters claims less allegiance to the country of their birth and are planting their roots more firmly in the country of their transplantation. This is in accordance with Landale and Oropesa's (2002) findings.

This study has shown that South African women in Australia experience shifts in identity, language and culture during the process of "transplanting" their lives and settling in a new country. Women need to grow after transplantation and this process might be viewed as the triple layers of an immigrant's life: uproot, transplant and preserve.

## Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank all South African women who participated in this study, as well as Anika Ferreira in her role as research assistant. This study was funded by the Faculty of Education, University of Southern Queensland.

## References

Amara, M., & Mar?i, A. e.-R. (2002). *Language education policy: The Arab minority in Israel*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2003). 3101.0 - *Australian demographic statistics*, Sep 2004. Retrieved 29.08.07, 2007, from http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/featurearticlesbytit

le/95D349600A7D92EBCA256FE700129A7E?OpenDocument

Clyne, M. G. (2001). Paradigm hopping and other feats of Veldhoven. In J. Klatter-Folmer & P. Van Avermaet (Eds.), *Theories on maintenance and loss of minority languages: Towards a more integrated explanatory framework.* (pp. 141-151). Berlin: Waxmann.

Clyne, M. G., & Kipp, S. (2000). *Language concentration in metropolitan areas*. Retrieved 20 June, 2003, from http://elecpress.monash.edu.au/pnp/free/pnpv6n2/clyne2.htm

Landale, N. S., & Oropesa, R. S. (2002). White, Black, or Puerto Rican? Radical self-identification among mainland and island Puerto Ricans. *Social Forces, 81*(1), 231-254.

Migration Expert. (2002). Living in Australia. from http://www.migrationexpert.com/australia/visa/living_in_australia.asp

Sonderegger, R., Barrett, P. M., & Creed, P. A. (2004). Patterns of cultural adjustment among young migrants to Australia. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 13*(3).

# Image Management for Women with Invisible Chronic Illness in the Various Aspects of Life

**Shalene Werth (werths@usq.edu.au)**
School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

Image management for the chronically ill woman in her various roles in life is at best complicated and at worst can be a nightmare. This is particularly the case for those with unseen chronic illnesses. The unseen aspect of illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, arthritis and chronic fatigue syndrome (to name just a few) mean that individuals devote considerable energy to the process of managing the way they are seen and perceived in the various facets of their lives. Concepts such as "passing" and "covering" are important aspects in the management of a chronic illness. The manner in which individuals employ these tools to manage their image in the different aspects of their lives is impacted significantly by the social reactions of family, friends and colleagues to their illness. This paper examines a narrative of a woman whose chronic illness flared for a period of months and how she approached the management of this sudden and unprecedented flare at work, at home and with friends. Discussion will address the theories relating to illness, specifically chronic unseen illness and the sick role and why it does not explain well the process of an invisible chronic illness. This paper explores the reality of unseen chronic illness and its impact on the roles of women at home, at work and with friends.

## Introduction

Women in today's society take on many roles, often as family member, colleague and friend, among others. When a "deviant" sick role is added to this, the opinions, reactions and observations of colleagues, family and friends can substantially influence the ability of the individual to manage her many roles and perhaps more importantly manage her image.

This paper will use a narrative approach to draw together the experiences of the author, who after suffering a severe bout of Crohn's disease paused to reflect on the impact this invisible chronic illness had on the relationship with individuals closest to her. Notions such as passing, covering, the sick role and the deviant sick role are discussed in relation to the events surrounding this event. This paper looks at a cross section of a woman's life and discusses tensions that illness places on the various roles she undertakes. Other authors have limited their discussion to one particular aspect, such as illness in relation to work or family life. This paper attempts to focus on the whole woman and the impact that chronic illness, specifically, invisible chronic illness has on each aspect of her life.

## Methodology

Chronic illness has a profound influence on every aspect of an individual's life. Using a narrative approach provides a greater understanding of these influences and the interconnectivity between each of them. "Narratives are constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space, constituted by causal employment [the pulling together of selected events]" (Somers & Gibson, 1993). The use of narrative gives information which is better situated as it is framed within its context. "Narrative demands that we discern the meaning of any single event only in temporal and spatial relationship to other events" (Somers & Gibson).

"Narrative is the fundamental scheme for linking individual human actions and events into interrelated aspects of an understandable composite" (Polkinghorne, 1988). The opportunity to learn from events and the relationships between events is enabled through the use of narratives. This is particularly useful when looking at illness as the impact it has on the life of the individual is influenced by the various life situations and the reactions of others in those circumstances. Polkinghorne comments that "[n]arratives exhibit an explanation instead of demonstrating it".

## What is Invisible Chronic Illness?

Bury's (1991) definition is used as a starting point for this paper: "chronic illness is…a long-term, and perhaps permanent event in a person's life". The addition of the invisible component to this definition seems quite simple as if it would not require a great deal of adjustment to the definition. However the implications of an invisible chronic illness require that this definition be broader and provide a greater scope to ensure that the reader obtains a better understanding of the implications of these insidious and often misunderstood illnesses.

Vickers (1997) states that "invisible chronic illness might be described as an ongoing medical condition, which impacts on the physical, emotional, judgemental or cognitive attributes of the individual". This definition

begins to extract the essence of the far reaching nature of a chronic illness as it highlights the impact such an illness has on the various aspects of life.

It would be nice to assume that the difficulties of illness are limited to those particular vagaries of that illness, but in fact the physical characteristics are only one nebulous layer in the trifle[29] that makes up the constantly changing life of an individual with invisible chronic illness. The individual quickly learns that managing the illness and managing your image as one with illness, are two concepts which are inextricably intertwined (a lot like trifle). The process of learning this after the diagnosis can provide a painful and yet necessary learning curve. Sadly, necessary only because of the society in which we live. Bury (in Anderson & Bury, 1988) comments that there are a "…host of possible social and emotional uncertainties for the individual, in addition to physical disability. Suffering the onset of symptoms involves changes in the body and in social relationships which are already likely to be complex".

"Society is inclined to see an illness, not just as being the responsibility of the individual concerned, but also as a failure on the individual's part to adhere to exercise or hygiene regimens, or appropriate diets" (Turner, 1995). Turner then goes on to say that illness is often understood, by society, "in individualistic terms rather than in terms of environmental and social causes. Illness is seen to be the personal problem of the worker often resulting from his or her moral failing". Contrary to this, is the view that many people with chronic illness see themselves as being basically healthy (Bury, in Anderson & Bury, 1988). This highlights one of the many disconnects endured by those with invisible chronic illness.

## To Disclose or Not to Disclose…

A difference between invisible chronic illnesses and other more readily seen chronic illnesses is that the person with an unseen illness generally has a choice regarding whether to disclose this illness to her family, friends or colleagues. However, individuals "may find that a recent exacerbation of their condition may necessitate frequent visits to specialists, hospitals or rehabilitation centres for treatment. Frequent workplace absences require explanation and may precipitate a frank admission to an employer" (Vickers, 1997). These circumstances may necessitate "coming out" or revealing the illness, hopefully, in a way that suits the image of the individual.

One of the main influencing factors in the decision to disclose her illness to others is the stigma which she fears she might encounter. "Fears of stigma and discrimination derive not so much from the disability as from the significance accorded to the condition by others" (Bury, in Anderson & Bury, 1988). Myers (2004) noted that "coming out [or disclosing] as a person with illness… was far more complex and intricate process than [she] had imagined". Some of the factors that Vickers (1997) cited for disclosure include "an aid to self esteem, empowerment and coping; for the edification of colleagues; or, a blunt refusal to accept the mantle of stigmatisation".

Choosing to disclose as a step in refusing to accept stigmatisation is far from the norm and many more individuals choose not to disclose their illness until they have considered their options while others will not disclose their illness until they no longer have the choice to hide their symptoms (Vickers, 1997). The majority of individuals faced with these circumstances react in comparable ways. This is supported by Goffman (1968) who states that "persons with different stigmas are in an appreciably similar situation and respond in an appreciably similar manner". Continuing to pass or cover in order to conceal illness can be important to individuals with invisible chronic illness for any number of reasons, including being unwilling to accept a sick role or deviant sick role in order to more easily manage their image for as long as they are able.

## The Sick Role

"Being chronically ill presents problems for anyone trying to work. Chronic illness does not follow the predictable route of warning signs, illness, recuperation and full recovery" (Vickers, 1997). This creates difficulties, when after disclosure of the illness has occurred, family, friends or colleagues tend to like to apply a sick role to the individual. However the sick role, as defined by Parsons (1951) "is framed by both rights and responsibilities for the one labelled sick and for society in general. The two rights are as follows:

1. The sick person is exempt from the performance of normal social role obligations
2. The sick person is exempt from being held responsible for being sick.

The two responsibilities imposed on a sick person are as follows:

1. The sick person should be motivated to get well quickly.
2. The sick person should seek technically competent help and then cooperate with those experts" (Parsons, 1951, as cited in Myers & Grasmick, 1990).

According to Parsons, these rights and responsibilities make up what is known as 'the sick role'.

It is widely accepted that the sick role is limited in terms of its applicability to chronic illness. However in the absence of a socially acceptable sick role for those

[29] Trifle is a dessert made up with layers of fruit, diced cake, jelly or jello, custard and cream.

with chronic illness, many people are confused and unsure of how to treat an individual with unseen chronic illness. Parsons (cited in Turner, 1995) argues that "permanent incumbency of the sick role should be regarded as a form of social deviance", namely, resulting in a deviant sick role (Turner). As unflattering as the term deviant sick role seems, it still does not fit the role of an individual with unseen chronic illness. Where a woman has choice about revealing her illness there is initially no type of sick role as she is considered to be 'passing' as normal, and when her illness flares there might still be an option for her to 'cover' her illness in order to appear well (Goffman, 1963; Myers, 2004; Vickers 1997). It is only once she has disclosed her illness and her illness flares or relapses that it becomes obvious that she does not fit society's expectations of being ill, receiving some kind of health care and ultimately recovering.

## The Experiences of the Author…

I have been diagnosed with Crohn's disease for more than 15 years. The situation examined in this narrative involves a flare of the disease which occurred in the later half of 2006. I became ill quite suddenly, and found that despite my best efforts I had very little energy and lost quite a bit of weight in a short space of time. Throughout the worst three months of my illness, I did not ever think it would take longer than a month to get better, however it did. Following is the author's own reflective narrative on her experience of invisible chronic illness.

### Image Management at Work

"One may expect a certain amount of callousness in modern organisations" (Vickers, 1997). This combined with an uncertainty of how colleagues would react when they understood the full extent of my illness has resulted in my employing a policy of gradual disclosure and to certain degree, desensitisation. Through this process I had developed an awareness with my colleagues and my boss that I already had some health issues when I had a sudden and unprecedented flare of Crohn's disease.

I was extremely fortunate to have an understanding boss, a job which I could largely do from home, and supportive colleagues. Initially I approached my boss and asked for some time off, thinking at the time that I was quite ill with a flare but should be right in a few weeks. One month later, I again spoke to my boss and made some additional arrangements about work because it was becoming obvious that I was indeed suffering significantly and probably would not be able to work at work for about a month (or so I thought). I negotiated my work for the remainder of the semester. We discussed what sick leave I would need to take, how I would manage my work and what I would endeavour to do in terms of going in to work for meetings. During my illness I went to my place of work from time to time, during these visits I attempted to 'cover' my illness, even though the environment there was very supportive in an attempt to manage my image. For the individual with an invisible chronic illness who is passing or covering even the deviant sick role does not fit. I feel that this is in part because I did not want it to fit any kind of sick role.

There is no doubt that my stress levels during this time were mitigated by the lack of stigma I was exposed to (Goffman, 1968; Myers, 2004) and the support I received from my supervisor and colleagues. Unfortunately both the literature on this topic and the narratives of others who have endured unseen chronic illness in its myriad forms, show that this is far from normal. Myers felt compelled in her circumstance to prove her "normalcy and productivity", showing that despite the fact that she decided to disclose her illness, she still was making a significant effort to manage her image. Possibly her strategy was one of risk minimisation in case she experienced a flare of her disease whilst attending an important residential school.

Stigma can take the form of a perception of malingering (Vickers, 2001). One aspect that is unique to unseen chronic illness is that because it is invisible to onlookers there may be a tendency of colleagues to look for other explanations for the behaviour of the individual. Malingering or delusions of illness may be the result of "the appearance of wellness in the bearer" (Vickers). This was not an issue that arose during my illness however, I was concerned that I might appear to be malingering and had my recovery taken any longer I had planned some informal ways of managing my performance so that I could be seen to be accountable resulting in yet another way of managing my image. I found that managing my illness in the workplace turned out to be an easier task than expected, however the image management I undertook with my friends was less straightforward.

### Image Management with Friends

The lack of formalised structure in social circles makes image management among friends more complicated. I found that during this flare of my illness, the most difficult thing was to ask for help from my friends. I believe this was for two reasons. The first is that I did not know what to ask for and I did not want to look like a "whinger". My close friends are all aware of my illness and are accustomed to my "dipping" out of society for short periods of time while recovering from flares of the disease (Bury, 1991). So when word got around that I was ill, my friends seemed to presume that it was nothing unusual. And in usual fashion gave me space, no pressure to do things, but neither did they call

to make sure I was alright, as I believe there was an expectation that after a couple of weeks I would resurface and join in with life again. After the first month passed and the worst of my flare was over, friends started to notice how much weight I had lost and how little I was able to function normally.

To give the impression that no-one helped out is probably somewhat erroneous as one friend helped out by picking the kids up from school when I was unable to drive. Another made us a meal which was really fabulous while another friend would visit from time to time to make sure we were managing. And these things were important in their value as encouragement and validation (Millen, Petersen, & Woodward, 1998) of the fact that I was ill.

I felt that I had lost my "voice" (Vickers & Parris, 2005). My family was in a situation where life was quite difficult for a number of months and I did not know how to change it. On reflection I believe that had I been well enough to formulate a strategy we would have been better able to manage my illness and the impact it had on our family and friends. Bury (1991) uses the term strategy to "refer to the actions taken to mobilize resources and maximize favourable outcomes". The irony is that I was not well enough to think through the issues sufficiently well enough to develop a coping strategy.

The image management I employed in this environment was limited to withdrawing from our social circles and not inviting friends to our house during my recovery. The strategy, if you could call it that, was basic and built around 'getting by' rather than managing the illness process. But even with the limited social contact we had with friends, I rarely admitted how ill I was feeling and so 'covered' as much as I was able. I'm not sure if this was because I feared some degree of stigmatisation or lack of understanding. This resulted in another situation where the deviant sick role (Turner, 1995) did not fit the role I had undertaken in order to image manage my illness with my friends.

## Image Management at Home

This part of the paper has been the most difficult for me to construct, particularly with reference to theory. Although sorting out the pertinent issues from our home life has been difficult to do, this part of the narrative is more circumspect. Initially I felt that I needed to fit in with the current thinking on the topic but then discovered I did not really care. This is my own story, as fractured (Vickers, 2005) as it might seem from the outside.

Subsequently I re-read Vickers' (2005) article which uses ante-narratives to explore the illness of women. She defines an ante-narrative as something which is "never final, never complete, but gives attention to what is going on" (Boje, 2001 in Vickers). This, I thought, this is me, the way my family and I cope is as unique as our own family identity. We use humour as a way of coping and we do not get hung up on things that do not get done. If the house is a mess, and anyone dropped in, it was simply too bad. So here is the story from the perspective of my family.

My rapid precipitation into this flare of Crohn's disease took all of the family by surprise. We initially adjusted the roles in our family from Mum and Dad sharing the load at home to Dad doing everything that needed to be done and anything that was not of immediate importance was left undone. Bury (1991) notes that "… the severity and nature of symptoms, as well as the values held by the individual and the responses of others, help determine what it is that people must cope with". My immediate family were very supportive, although my 5 year old son was less than happy with the changes to the household – possibly this had more to do with missing out on his favourite dinners than anything else. My parents made a weekly trip from their home (2 hours away) to help with cooking, cleaning and ironing, their support was invaluable.

Millen et al. (1998) state that sufferers of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) often have difficulty in "gaining initial and continuing full acceptance and support from even close kin, spouses, parents and siblings about their 'mystery illness'". While the diagnosis of my illness was clear, the form that this flare took was very unusual and there was no indication from my past experiences with Crohn's disease how long this would take to pass. The unconditional support of my family enabled me to continue an adjusted form of work and also to continue with a limited form of socialisation with my friends. There was no passing in this situation and only minimal but necessary covering was instituted to help alleviate the children's fears and concerns about Mum being ill.

"Sufferers [of CFS] have persistent fears of being called 'malingering' as it serves as a milder negative sanction within the family… such a negative (deviant) label can erode a sufferer's personal status and reduce self esteem very quickly (Millen et al., 1998). This is not something I had to contend with because of the support of my family, there was no need to manage my image within the family. This gave me the confidence and self efficacy to continue with my work despite the severity of my illness. Millen et al. go on to say that "…the family… are crucial for the essential care and emotional equilibrium of CFS sufferers in order to build and maintain positive esteem…".

The end result was, we did get by, however it seemed quite obvious to me that everyone in the family was very glad when Mummy started cooking again, probably all for different reasons!

## Conclusions

I feel that in many ways I have skimmed across the surface of many issues. The type of sick role I enjoyed with my family was not a typical sick role or even a deviant sick role. I was given the freedom to be ill and allowed to heal as I was able without pressure to conform to the preconceived ideas of others, of what it is to be sick and how quickly to recovery should take place. The only pressure I received was from myself to recover and be able to fulfil my chosen roles of mother, wife, friend, and colleague.

My aim in writing about my experiences with invisible chronic illness has been to extend the thinking on the topic past any one scenario, particularly in relation to work. These issues are multifaceted and impact on all aspects of a woman's life. Vickers (1997) notes that "the 'journey' associated with living and working with an 'invisible' chronic illness (ICI) is traumatic and poignant". This has certainly been my experience, despite all of the support from colleagues and family, just dealing with the image management issues was exhausting, without the added weight of the illness itself. Essential elements of this type of image management are passing and covering and they are critical for the image management of the individual with invisible chronic illness.

## References


Bury, M. (1988). Meanings at risk: the experience of arthritis. In R. Anderson, & M. Bury (Eds), *Living with chronic illness*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Bury, M. (1991). The sociology of chronic illness: A review of research and prospects. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 13(4), 451-468. Retrieved July 9, 2007, http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/pdf/ 10.1111/j.1467-9566.1991.tb00522.x

Goffman, E. (1968). *Stigma: Notes on the management of spoiled identity*, New Jersey: Penguin Books.

Millen N. T., Petersen, C. L., & Woodward, R. (1998). A sociological analysis of chronic fatigue syndrome and the impact on family support structures. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy,* 18(7/8), 124-143.

Myers, K. R. (2004). Coming out: Considering the closet of illness. *Journal of Medical Humanities, 25*(4), 255-270.

Myers, S. T., & Grasmick, H. G., (1990). The social rights and responsibilities of pregnant women: an application of Parson's sick role model. *The Journal of Applied Behavioural Science 26*(2), 157-172.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative Knowing and the Human Science*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Somers, M. R., & Gibson, G. D. (1993). Reclaiming the epistemological "other" narrative and the social constitution of identity. In Calhoun, C. (Ed.), *From persons to nations: The social constitution of identities*, London: Basil Blackwell.

Turner, B. S. (1995). *Medical power and social knowledge*. London: Sage.

Vickers, M. H. (1997). Life at work with 'invisible' chronic illness (ICI): The 'unseen', unspoken, unrecognised dilemma of disclosure. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 9*(7), 240-252.

Vickers, M. H. (2001). Unseen chronic illness and work: authentic stories from "women in-between". *Women in Management Review, 16*(2), 62-74.

Vickers, M. H., (2005). Illness, work and organisation: postmodern perspectives, antenarratives and chaos narratives for the reinstatement of voice. *Journal of Critical Postmodern Organisation Science, 3*(2), 74-88.

Vickers, M. H., & Parris, M. A. (2005). Towards ending the silence: working women caring for children with chronic illness. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal 17*(2) 91-108. Retrieved July 11, 2007, from http://springerlink.metapress.com/content/p6153jn60 303654/fulltext.pdf

# Supporting Academics to Reach their Full Potential

**Lynne E. Wright (lwright@uow.edu.au)**
Director, Employment Equity and Diversity
University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia

**Joanne Buckskin (Joanne_buckskin@uow.edu.au)**
Woolyungah Indigenous Centre
University of Wollongong, Wollongong NSW 2522 Australia

**Abstract**

Academic, mother of three… and on the road to a PhD. Yes it rhymes, but the rhythm of life for emerging academic Joanne Buckskin, a young female Indigenous academic, is not always in tune with being a single parent of three active children. Joanne's personal account of her drive to be educated is inspiring and underpins the importance of equity and diversity programs. How does the University of Wollongong support women like Joanne to reach their full potential? What policies, programs and rewards have been found to be effective and valued?

## Introduction

My name is Joanne Buckskin I am a descendant of the Wirangu and Narrungga people of South Australia on my father's side and Australian Scottish/Irish from my mother's side. I am going to share my journey to academia at the University of Wollongong and the personal triumphs and milestones that have inspired me to continue with my education despite a number of personnel setbacks and barriers.

## Journey to Academia

One of the key themes of this years' International Women's Conference is to raise awareness about the difficulties experienced by single parents and Indigenous women. Therefore I will share some of my personal journey about surviving domestic violence, being a single mother of four (not three as first mentioned) children and juggling my career and community obligation as an Indigenous woman.

I first became a victim of a domestic violent relationship at the tender age of five, where I can remember witnessing my stepfather violently attacking my mother for not obeying any number of his requests. I remember feeling scared and yet instinctively protective of my mother. These violent experiences planted a seed that led me to attract a succession of violent men throughout my teenage and adult years. This is referred to as a "Cycle of Violence" that entraps women in violent powerless relationships that damage self-esteem and the ability to exert agency over your life.

My mother eventually left the violent relationship and moved us to Albury NSW, which is a rural town situated half way between Sydney and Melbourne. My mum worked as a dry-cleaner fulltime, and I had two other siblings one older and one younger. It was not long before my mother attracted another violent man who began living with us. He was very intimidating and abusive with major psychological problems inherited from his experiences in the Vietnam War. He had no children of his own and had little understanding and knowledge about teenage girls, my sister and I were fifteen and thirteen. I soon found security with my first boyfriend who was a local Indigenous man. Having been socialised that violence and abuse towards women was a normal experience I was not too shocked when Walter became controlling and physically abusive toward me. At the age of fourteen I discovered I was pregnant, and it was then too late for an abortion without serious complications.

I remember wanting to keep the baby but feeling incredibly selfish if I did so. My younger woman's intuition and sensibility kept saying that I had nothing to offer this child so with much consideration I decided the best thing for my child's future would be to adopt the baby. I left the comfort and security of my family and headed to Melbourne where I enrolled in high school through a correspondence program and spent the next five months living with other teenage girls in very similar circumstances. I gave birth to a baby boy on May 21st 1986 after a very long labour that ended in an emergency caesarean.

The adoption agency in charge of my case gave me a number of choices in relation to the profile of the adoptive family for my son. I requested that Aiden was to be adopted by a family who had children and that the family had to have connection with Indigenous communities and make him proud of his Aboriginal Heritage.

Giving up Aiden had to be worth something, so this has been the premise and driving force of my passion to become educated. I returned to school the following year to complete year 9 and promised myself that

becoming educated was the best thing I could say to him if he ever turned around and wanted to know why his birth mother gave him away.

I continued through school to year 12 and applied to the University of South Australia to enrol in a Bachelor of Teaching. While completing my tertiary qualifications I had three more children. I decided to complete a Masters of Adult Education because by the time I had three children in five years I quickly realised that being in classroom all day with thirty kids was not my idea of a fulfilling career. I thought adult education was far more interesting and less intimidating.

Throughout the period of my study I remained a single mother and was again in another relationship that proved to be violent and disastrous. To escape the violence I left South Australia for the NSW South Coast to restart my life. Within a year of moving, an identified position at the University of Wollongong Shoalhaven Campus was advertised. I successfully applied and won a tenured Lecturer position.

## Professional Profile

My studies have taken me into specialist education areas where I develop, teach and evaluate pre service teacher education subjects in Anti racism and Aboriginal Education. I teach around 75 undergraduate and postgraduate students per semester. My key motivation and passion include developing our future teachers' cross cultural competence and confidence to ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge, skills and resources to successfully teach and represent diverse and marginalised groups in Australian schools.

Anyone who has undertaken studies or taught subjects in Anti racism education would probably empathise with me when I say that empowering students to understand Indigenous world views, socially, culturally and politically, requires certain skills and expertise. Although having educational qualification is paramount, one must have the experience and knowledge of working in Indigenous communities. The lived experiences provide students with knowledge that is generally a key ingredient in developing their awareness and sensitivities toward Indigenous peoples. Generally speaking, the profile of my students is made up of non Indigenous middle class Australians who have had very little experiences, with Indigenous communities, histories and worldviews and often their understanding of Aboriginal Australia includes what they hear, see and read from the media. It is an enormous responsibility both professionally and personally to challenge students to work at the cultural interface in institutions that have not always been responsive to Indigenous students and communities (Phillips & Lampert, 2005).

## EED Support Programs

So often Indigenous academics do not enter academia through traditional pathways. In general we are students who have entered undergraduate studies as mature age students with a wealth of life experience and employment history. Many Indigenous academics enter tenured positions without a PhD which means we face the enormous challenge of raising our kids, meeting our kinship and community obligations and fulfilling the demands of fulltime lecturing and research loads. Often this ends in burnout or academics choosing to move into another career direction. The programs highlighted later in this paper have provided Indigenous academics at UOW with a range of targeted support programs that aim to meet a variety of our needs. For example in 2005 I was successful in applying for a Staff Equity Scholarship open to Indigenous women. The scholarship provided funding to cover childcare costs while I undertook after hours study for a Mater of Education Research. On successful completion of the course work subjects I became eligible to apply for a PhD candidature, which has been critical for my longer term academic career prospects.

At UOW, tenured positions have a two-year probationary period and after this time one has to submit an application to a senior committee. The application must demonstrate ability to successfully fulfil the role of academia. Prior to submitting this application the Employment Equity and Diversity (EED) unit offered the workshop *Starting your Academic Career*, which outlined the probation process and gave me significant insight on how to write a successful application, which clearly demonstrated my strengths, skills and abilities in teaching and research. Over the past four years I have had the opportunity to participate in numerous EED initiated workshops that provided inspiring key speakers, resources and training in research, all of which have furthered my knowledge and understanding of becoming a well rounded academic as well creating key networking opportunities with other academics on campus.

In conclusion I would like to reiterate my support for the diverse range of programs and support strategies for academic women that are offered for professional and prospective professional women. It has been my pleasure to work with someone as professional and as compassionate as Lynne Wright who works incredibly at listening to, recognising and supporting the professional and personnel needs of women on campus.

## Supporting Academic Women

The University of Wollongong has a diverse range of programs and support strategies for academic women,

which are largely driven by the EED Unit. These have been introduced over a period of almost ten years primarily as a means of redressing the gap of academic women in certain disciplines and at the senior levels of the organization and also to demonstrate a genuine commitment from the University executive to support staff from our equity target groups.

In 1998, the previous Director of EED, Robyn Weekes, introduced the workshop, *Tuning your Promotion Prospects* particularly to try and improve the number of women applying for and gaining promotion. The success of that workshop lead to the development in 2003 of *Switched On: an Integrated Development Program for Women,* a series of workshops designed specifically to support academic women from the start of their career to the pinnacle of gaining a professorship. The series program overview, as it was first established is outlined in Table 1. Evaluation of these workshops demonstrates that these have been very successful initiatives and feedback from the participants has been the catalyst for initiatives, which will be outlined later in the paper.

For participants of *Starting your Academic Career*, it is often the first session that they have attended at the university aimed at women only. They find this a very supportive environment where they can openly express their fears, concerns and misgivings about being a new female academic. Often, but not always, these women are young, are at the beginning or middle of completing their PhD and sometimes have young families. The opening address by a male member of the senior executive who empowers them to think of themselves and know that it is OK to say "no" when they are being asked to do more teaching and administration than their male colleagues, is a critical way to set the scene for the day.

Participants have consistently indicated that as a new academic they have valued the program for the following reasons:

*Very well thought through and organised course. Large number of pearls of wisdom to take away*

*...has opened the door – challenged my organization – direction and motivated me to take steps towards formalising my career path*

*I found this course very helpful indeed – very empowering and positive. Also great to meet others in similar situations to myself*

The next workshop in the series, *Jump Starting your Research*, once again is designed for the newer academic woman launching into the grant application circuit and beginning to develop research networks. Women by this stage have usually completed their PhD and are ready to launch into research activity but are maybe lacking confidence, have experienced early rejections on their grant applications and understand that they need to be proactive in gaining some new skills. The following feedback demonstrates the value that participants gained from hearing from the panel of experienced women researchers who are honest at the same time as encouraging. The opportunity to network with other women was also an often repeated positive outcome.

Table 1: Switched on Workshop Series

| Program | Target | Content |
|---|---|---|
| Starting your academic career | New female academic staff particularly level A | Probation process<br>Role of level A academics<br>Balancing 4 aspects of academic role<br>Managing your PhD<br>Understanding evidence of achievement<br>Time management |
| Jump Starting your Research | Female academic staff who wish to enhance their research activity | Understanding grant schemes<br>Developing a research network<br>Self promotion without shame<br>Preliminary grant writing<br>Getting started with postgraduate supervision<br>Time management |
| Down the track: develop-ing and managing a research program | Female academics who are active researchers but in early stages of their career | Navigating external grant schemes<br>Advanced grant writing<br>Managing grants<br>Productive post-graduate supervision |
| Tuning your promotion prospects: preparing for promotion | Academic women working towards a promotion application in the next 1 – 2 years | What does the promotion criteria really mean?<br>What makes a good application?<br>Reviewing your CV against the criteria<br>Action plan to fill the gaps<br>Questions and answers with expert panel |
| Zooming up: the move from | Female academic staff level D | Mentoring program for women progressing to level D |

*Developing a research network was excellent*

*Panel at the end really encouraging – nice to hear from other women*

*Panel discussion women are inspirational*

*...certainly have several take home messages*

*wish I had come when I first started down the academic pathway...*

The program, *Down the track: Developing and managing a research program,* did not really take off in the same way as the first two workshops in the series. The content was in many ways duplicated by

general programs offered by the research units and the career development programs for all staff. It has therefore not remained a feature of the series.

*Tuning your Promotion Prospects* has been the longest running program with the greatest number of participants attending in the early years. The success of the program is in part reflected in the increasing number of female academics applying for and gaining promotion. Late in 2006 this workshop was cancelled due to insufficient interest, and it was felt that because a number of new strategies university wide have been introduced to support an improved promotion process, that this program may have run its course. However, this may have just been a natural "blip" as there are already a large number of applicants for the 2007 course to be conducted in August.

Feedback demonstrates again just how much this program is valued:

*The encouraging atmosphere of the workshop enabled me to feel positive about preparing my application.*

*Great to have a supportive environment*

*Amazing revelation of gaps, clarification of expectations*

*It offered excellent pragmatic advice and strongly emphasised the importance of being yourself*

The final program in the series *Zooming Up:The move from Aspro to Professor* has really been an informal individual mentoring program rather than a formal advertised program. Mentoring can be a really powerful strategy to career develop another person and to provide them with new skills, strategies and confidence to move forward beyond their current position. The value of mentoring is widely written up in the academic literature and can be used to provide the leverage often required to secure funding for more formal programs. This will be explored more fully later in the paper.

Evaluation of each workshop in the *Switched on Series* has resulted in further programs being developed or enhanced to meet the emerging needs of women.

Formal evaluation from the program and other anecdotal feedback through women's network group meetings have resulted in further programs outlined below.

## Mentoring

Deans and Heads of School at UOW often assume a mentoring role where there is a strong culture of career nurturing. However, this may not always occur and women at UOW may ask the EED unit or the career development unit to identify a willing mentor. This third party intervention is often preferred because as Ragins and Rose (1996) have shown, women are often reluctant to approach someone to be a mentor, particularly of the opposite gender, due to three main blockers: "sexual issues, sex-role expectations and opportunities for meeting mentors". In some disciplines women may find it difficult to meet potential male mentors in a setting conducive to establishing this relationship. Women do not want their initiation of a mentoring relationship to be misconstrued as a sexual advance nor would they want to establish a traditional male female relationship with a female taking a more passive role.

Townsend (2002) highlights the benefits of mentoring programs and suggests that women mentored by men or women will benefit. Often in non-traditional areas there will be fewer female mentors at the senior levels and men are more likely to be approached to take on this role with female mentees. Alternatively women can be mentored by other women outside their faculty; this is reasonable when the mentoring is not specifically related to research and teaching but more generally a personal supportive strategy.

Whilst the mentoring program at UOW has been identified for women at the senior levels making the step to professor, Gibson's (2004) research shows that women valued research right throughout their career and that their needs varied at different times in their careers. It is therefore important to have a number of mentors throughout a career so that a person's different needs are met at the various stages. For example one mentor may be better equipped to provide research mentoring and another may be an excellent leader, providing the advice required to an emerging leader.

The Women in Commerce Research Platform at UOW, was introduced in 2004 with the key aim of assisting female academics at all levels in the Faculty of Commerce to increase their research output (Barrett et al., 2005). This successful program has gathered momentum and has resulted in positive networking and mentoring opportunities for all participants.

The Women In Science Enquiry Network (WISNet), is another opportunity at UOW for women across the sciences disciplines to meet each other and to support each other in their career progression.

## Linking Women

The Linking Women Network has provided a basis for a range of networking opportunities and has been the focus of a web page to advertise and promote specific initiatives. McKenzie (1995, in Chesterman, 2004) highlights the importance of networks as a means for enhancing career advancement opportunities by developing contacts with whom to share information and for advice and even moral support. Chesterman suggests that as women climb higher in the

organisation, and their peer support falls away, they are more likely to benefit from cross faculty and cross-institutional networks. Linking Women network events have provided this much need cross faculty networking for women at all levels but in particular for the senior women who may be the single female professor in their faculty.

## Being an Academic Mother

Jon Marcus (2007) notes that at the University of California whenever there is a group of female doctoral students together in a career discussion, the question arises of how, when and if ever to have children in terms of their academic career. He suggests that the tenure path often collides with the childbearing years and that this is why women are not progressing as quickly as they should.

This is consistent with the cries for help from women academics at UOW who have asked for strategies on how to manage being a mother and an academic. A Return to Work Grant, a post maternity leave grant equivalent to twelve weeks full pay, has really been a salvation for academic women who have previously found it difficult to continue their research when their children are very young. This grant can be used to engage a research assistant, support part-time employment or childcare. In reality it makes it much more viable for women to return to work after having a child and minimise the "research gap".

## Equity Fellowships

The Equity Fellowships, which Joanne referred to earlier in this paper, were introduced in 2005 and were funded by the Vice-Chancellor to support academic staff in the targeted equity groups to complete their PhD, and for Indigenous staff their Masters, when their aim is to go onto their PhD. Joanne has already acknowledged that this was a critical program for her to complete her Masters. A recent revision of the guidelines for the Equity Fellowships has ensured that Joanne will be able to apply for a second Equity Fellowship when she is undertaking her PhD. The Equity Fellowship is most commonly used to buy out teaching for a session to allow staff to concentrate on their PhD completion. It has however been used for childcare and a research assistant or combination of these. With one exception the recipients have all been women.

## Conclusion

It goes without saying that the issues of supporting academic women to reach their full potential is not isolated to Wollongong, or indeed Australia, and therefore we see similar programs in many Australian and international universities. The issues across the sector are very similar, and the desire to support women is the same, the differing factors are often in the resources that can be allocated to the support programs.

UOW relies heavily on the good will of senior male and female academics to give freely and generously of their time to support the programs offered at UOW. This shows that in general, academics are not pulling up the ladder behind them but rather leaning down with an open and welcoming hand. This is true equity in action.

## References


Barrett, M., S., Dolnicar, et al. (2005). Launching research: experiences with and achievements of a research mentoring platform for academic women. *Women in Research, Women Doing Research*, Gladstone.

Chesterman, C. (2004). *Putting their hands up: How to bring women into university management and support them*. National Tertiary Education union Women's Conference, Melbourne, NTEU.

Gibson, S. K. (2004). Being mentored: The experience of women faculty. *Journal of Career Development, 30*(3), 173- 188.

Marcus, J. (2007). Helping academics have families and tenure too. *Change. New Rochelle 39*(2), 27-33.

Phillips, J., & Lampert, J. (2005). *Introductory Indigenous studies in education: The importance of knowing*. Frenchs Forest: Pearson Education.

Ragins, B. R. (1996). Jumping the hurdles: Barriers to mentoring for women in organizations. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal, 17*(3), 37-41.

Townsend, G. C. (2002). People who make a difference: Mentors and role models. *SIGCSE Bulletin, 34*(2), 57-61.

# Making meaning of women's networks: A community of practice framework

**Dr Jacquelin McDonald (mcdonalj@usq.edu.au)**
Learning and Teaching Support Unit
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Dr Cassandra Star (star@usq.edu.au)**
School of Accounting Economics and Finance, Faculty of Business
Australian Centre for Sustainable Catchments
University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba QLD 4350 Australia

**Abstract**

Women's lives are multilayered through involvement in education, employment, family, community and everything, thus involving women in a number of community groups, networks or communities of practice. These groups exist in a myriad of contexts and are often a key component of the community and professional life of women. Some of these groups have a formal business structure, while others are more informal, with membership changing as the group focus ebbs and flows. This paper will investigate the factors that distinguish a community of practice from more informal women's groups, and identify how community of practice structures and processes can be used to achieve the aims and objectives of women's groups. Women's networks are constructed when women interact in informal or organisational settings. Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis. Over time, they develop a unique perspective on their topic as well as a body of common knowledge, practices, and approaches. They develop personal relationships, established ways of interacting, and may even develop a common sense of identity. The conference presentation will provide a brief overview of the distinguishing features of networks and communities of practice and an opportunity for the audience to participate in the exploration of their existence in women's networks, and how community of practice structures and processes can be used to enhance such networks.

## Introduction

Women's lives are multilayered through involvement in education, employment, family, community and everything, thus involving women in a number of community groups, networks or communities of practice. This paper provides a brief overview of the processes, structure and differences between women's networks and communities of practice, with a focus on professional settings. Based on a case study of a community of practice (CoP) located in a higher education setting, it is suggested that CoP structure and processes provide a powerful means of supporting women in achieving their personal and profession goals.

## Women's Networks

Networks are an important part of everyone's lives. Salancik (1995, p. 345) says "networks are constructed when individuals, whether organizations or humans, interact". These groups include participation in family, friends, personal hobby and professional networks, which we draw on for emotional, practical and inspirational support through both good and bad times. These networks change as we journey through life; prenatal groups are replaced by nursing mothers, school and sport clubs, then professional and hobby groups. The way we interact in each of these situations will depend on our relationships with other members of the network and what we either consciously or unconsciously are trying to achieve through our interactions. For example, think of the different interactions within family and professional groups, or when having lunch and the sharing personal "secrets" with a girlfriend.

In professional contexts women tend to network differently from men. Women often talk to whoever is physically closest, actively engage with someone who appears "lost" or stick with someone they already know. Men tend to be far more strategic as they will arrive at an event and try to gauge who they should talk to build business relations. Jackson (2003, p.1) suggests that women also need to be strategic, build relationships at a range of levels and argues that "women though often tend to want everyone to be their best friend and don't always understand that business is about strategic positioning and building a network of people around you who provide advice etc on a range of different areas". This reactive, rather than proactive, networking behaviour and the existing social and business structures mean women often have limited access to, or are excluded from, dominant organisational networks. Ibarra (1993) argues that the organisational context in which interaction networks are embedded produces unique constraints on women and racial minorities, causing their networks to differ from those of their white male counterparts in composition and

characteristics of their relationships with network members. Many women still find themselves in business structures that are not inclusive of women's behaviour and life demands.

At an international level, De Jorio (2005, p. 1) suggests that the study of women's informal networks makes the activities of marginal groups more visible, and thereby provides "a more in-depth and localized understanding of women's diverse interests and structural opportunities for change is needed to promote concrete and durable social changes". When discussing women's activities in Third World development-oriented initiative, De Jorio argues that participation in local women's networks have made it possible for women to become driving forces in a number of development initiatives. This avoids the otherwise recurring pattern of elite capture - a process by which local elites become the primary beneficiary of much of the resources allocated for development (De Jorio). Given that both formal business structures and informal community networks may foster inequitable social structures and access to resources, the following discussion presents an alternative approach for women to organise their community and professional life. The approach recommended is a community of practice approach.

## Overview of Communities of Practice (CoP)

The term "communities of practice" emerged from Lave and Wenger's (1991) study that explored learning in the apprenticeship model, where practice in the community enabled the apprentice to move from peripheral to full participation in the community activities. Communities of practice (CoPs) are "groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis. They develop a body of common knowledge, practices, and approaches. They also develop personal relationships and established ways of interacting. They may even develop a common sense of identity" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4).

Communities of practice are different from networks in that their basic structure comprises of three fundamental elements. These elements are a *domain* of knowledge that creates a common ground and sense of common identity, a *community* of people who care about the domain and create the social fabric of learning, and a shared *practice* that the community develops to be effective in its domain (Wenger, 1998). Communities of practice are different from traditional organisations and learning situations, such as task forces or project teams. While a team starts with an assigned task, usually instigated and directed by an "authority" figure, a CoP does not have a formal structure or assigned task, so the focus may emerge from negotiation, and there is continual potential for new direction. Communities of practice encourage active participation and collaborative decision-making by individuals, as opposed to separated decision-making that is present in traditional organisations (Johnson, 2001). Members can assume different roles and hierarchical, authoritarian management is replaced by self-management and ownership of work (Collier & Esteban, 1999). The learning that evolves from these communities is shared, in that the collaborative knowledge of the community is greater than any individual knowledge. A community of practice provides an opportunity for members to continually engage in learning about their practice.

There are some key differences between informal networks and communities of practice that lead us to recommend the CoP approach as an appropriate method for support and professional development for women's work. Where networks are informal, CoPs are more formal – they have a particular domain of knowledge or focus, and this a particular membership focus. This increased formality over networks allows the members to elicit and secure outside support (from individual and institutions), as well as attracting resources and/or funding as applicable. Related to this is the CoP approach regarding the structure of activity around *domain* and *practice* that ensures the focus of the CoP work on those areas of immediate interest to involved individuals. This structure ensures a continuous focus on support and professional development. In addition, the formality and structured nature of CoPs ensures a greater permanence to a group and its activities than is in evidence in most informal networks. This permanence allows longevity in the support offered to members, as well as the ability to support more members over time. The final difference between informal networks and communities of practice is that of the presence of a designated facilitator. With a CoP facilitator(s) ensure that the above elements of the CoP structure and approach are maintained to deliver maximum benefit to members in terms of support and professional development. It is the cumulative benefit of these differences that significantly focuses and increases the outcomes for members that lead us to recommend CoP processes as a support structure and mechanism in professional settings.

## Using CoPs to support academic work – A case study from higher education

Studies of the work lives of Australian academics have confirmed what many have long suspected – we work long hours, face significant stress, and have a general time poverty perspective on our professional lives

(Forgasz & Leder, 2006; Goodyear, 2005; McInnes, 2000). For first year core course leaders, these concerns and the demands upon them are magnified. First year core course leaders are at the frontline of university teaching, along with their teaching teams (e.g. Krause, Hartley, James, & McInnis, 2005; Pitkethley & Prosser, 2001). At USQ, a core course leader in the Faculty of Business may coordinate more than one transnational course offering of over 1200 students a year, across three semesters, as well as contending with other professional demands and commitments outside the realm of teaching. How to foster collaborative professional structures with individual academics under such circumstances is a dilemma. Informal networks can be neglected as time and stress stretch individual academics and formalised committee structures are often seen as a waste of time. Committees are also much more likely to reflect institutional priorities rather than academic needs. The USQ Faculty of Business community of practice for core course leaders (including both female and male members) nurtures collaborative professional development.

The Australian higher education sector is currently characterised as having been through a significant period of commercialisation and marketisation, particularly in regard to the provision of teaching to both domestic and international students (Marginson, 2006). These changes have placed considerable pressure on individual staff and led to increases in teaching loads and expectations (Anderson, Johnson, & Saha, 2002; Forgasz & Leder, 2006; McInnes, 2000). At the same time the sector has experienced real declines in funding and continued increases in student numbers. These two trends taken together have led to economic rationalisation of teaching, assessment and course delivery across the sector (Schapper & Mayson, 2004). For first year teachers this swell combines with the research tide, where the maxim of "publish or perish" remains truer than ever, to produce a powerful tidal surge. Significant funding outcomes are attached to research output, both individually and institutionally. With the widespread use of short-term contracts in the sector (Macnamara, 2007), those who publish survive, and those who don't, do not. In this storm of competing and increasing expectations, CoPs can provide a safe haven for first year teachers, who are more often than not, women; it can provide the support to swim against the tide. This ongoing tension between research and teaching functions is exemplified by two recent developments in the Australian higher education sector – the Research Quality Framework (RQF) and the Teaching and Learning Performance Fund (TLPF). These two initiatives highlight the tension between teaching and learning quality and research quality expectations in Australian universities.

The RQF, with its first round slated to begin in 2007, is mooted to drive an intensification of research focus within universities (Illing, 2006a; 2006b) due to the likely funding implications flowing from university performance in the first round. At an institutional level, the priorities to flow from this new research performance measurement scheme will have significant impacts on individual academics and the requirements of them regarding research output. For many academics, the increased quality and quantity expectations placed on their research increases pressure on the quantity and quality of time available for teaching and learning activities. At the same time, the Federal government, via DEST's Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, has also signalled the need for universities across the sector to lift their performance in regard to teaching quality. Given the financial implications, institutional policies are also aligning with these priorities. This is particularly true for first year course leaders – they are the institutional frontline for teaching quality and related issues of retention and progression. Thus, individual academics are at the centre of heightened institutional tensions between research priorities and new teaching and learning priorities. This creates an important institutional imperative to support individual academics as they face and negotiate the new challenges associated with these policies and the resultant expectations.

Against the context of competing tensions within the current higher education environment in Australia, the CoP structure and approach provides a forum for staff, to debate strategies to deal with these competing priorities and their impact on teaching and learning at the coalface. Communities of practice specifically grow, or are fostered, to provide a shared space around shared concerns – in this case, the teaching and learning of first year core course leaders in a Faculty of Business. Individual members of communities of practice face shared challenges provided by their student cohorts (Biggs, 2003; Sharrock, 2000), their institutional context, and the challenges facing the wider higher education sector (Harman, 2004; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Schapper & Mayson, 2004). These shared challenges provide the basis for a common understanding between members, which in our case has been further strengthened by the collaborative identification of priority issues to be addressed by the group. Establishing and nurturing a shared sense of identity provides the missing element in ensuring the institutional memory and sharing of teaching and learning practices. It also provides a safe place for reflection and experimentation on teaching and learning for individual staff members.

The two facilitators played an important role in the conceptualisation, emergence and ongoing, meaningful, productive activities of the CoP. It is interesting to note that the female facilitators used their networking, nurturing and communication skills to implement and sustain the CoP. Rather than being 'soft' skills these female traits enhanced strategic, but collaborative, ways of working with colleagues. The facilitators were instrumental in overcoming some of the challenges faced by any new initiative – securing and maintaining financial and institutional support, being able to offer participants professional development activities valued enough to ensure a commitment of their time, facilitating the ongoing support of key institutional champions, and providing clear, measurable progress towards strategic institutional goals. Meetings are structured around the three CoP elements, domain knowledge, community and practice, to ensure value for time commitment by the members, while providing an avenue to build and share their existing expertise.

In the first CoP meeting, staff brainstormed on the priority issues facing them as the leaders of first year core courses. In subsequent activities, these issues were prioritised to set our agenda for the first 12 months of the CoP. Approaching the CoP's priorities and agenda setting in this way served several important purposes. Identifying issues as a group provided a sense of group ownership of the process and agenda from the beginning. Having the group shape the agenda also allowed the identification of the most pressing issues at the ground level, rather than at the University or the Faculty level. In addition, the process of group brainstorming allowed identification of common issues to all first year core course leaders and a sense of shared challenge that cuts across the disciplinary divide. Monthly meetings are built around the basic CoP structure identified by Wenger (1998), to provide opportunities for members to engage in learning about their practice. For example, guest speakers were invited to a CoP meeting to build the domain of assessment knowledge, members shared their practice with other members, and the community building is factored into all meetings by ensuring that at least thirty minutes of the two hours face to face meeting is dedicated to informal interaction over refreshments. The aim of this meeting structure is to ensure that each area of CoP activity is addressed, and to provide clear direction, outcomes and value adding for members. The structure, community support, and outcomes, have assisted in addressing initial scepticism about "just another meeting" and the need to make best use of time, for time poor first year educators.

A community of practice approach to teaching and learning in higher education provides a space for staff to collaboratively reflect, review and regenerate their current teaching and learning practices. Within higher education, the organisational structures and culture of individualism produce a situation where individuals are often isolated and unaware of the practices of others. While initiatives to overcome this individualism within research endeavours, such as research centres and research networks, are well advanced, these are less common in relation to teaching in higher education (Laurillard, 2002). The consequences of a lack of formal or informal structures for sharing of learning and teaching practice contributes to a lack of institutional memory regarding teaching and learning innovations, little acknowledgement or recognition of the diversity of good teaching and learning practices outside formal award mechanisms, and little support for individuals in need of mentoring or guidance in reforming, improving, or reflection on their teaching and learning practices.

Of course, CoP membership is not just about "the serious stuff" of first year learning and teaching. It is also about a celebration of the triumphs of educators engaging with first year students as they undertake the big step of starting their learning journey at university. The CoP provides a safe and supportive environment to share these triumphs and test out innovative learning and teaching ideas on like minded professionals, before implementing with the students.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that CoPs provide an effective approach and structure in supporting women's work and aspirations in professional contexts. CoPs are recommended over informal networks due to the benefits offered by having a formal structure, the focus on *domain* and *practice*, the permanence offered by formalising processes and outcomes, and the role of the facilitator(s) in ensuring that benefits accrue to CoP members. In addition, the structure and nature of CoP processes emphasise a focus on shared member concerns and interests, which are often lost or ignored in formalised institutionally-instigated structures, such as committees. In the case study outlined in the paper, we demonstrate the use of a CoP approach and structure to provide support and professional development within a higher education setting. Given the current upheavals in higher education that significantly impact individual academics and first year teachers in particular, a space that enables academics to address a range of common issues through a negotiated group agenda, is a significant support mechanism. This is an especially powerful mechanism with the ability of a facilitator(s) to provide and foster knowledge, the development of professional skills, and both formal and informal mentoring within the CoP structure. The community of practice approach provides significant opportunity for

women to receive support for, and help in achieving, their professional aspirations.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge the members of the Faculty of Business Core Course Leaders' Community of Practice. We'd also like to acknowledge the funding support for the FoB CoP provided by the Faculty of Business and the Vice Chancellor's strategic funding program, at the University of Southern Queensland.

## References

Anderson D., Johnson R., & Saha, L. (2002) *Changes in academic work: implications for universities of the changing age distribution and work roles of academic staff* (Commissioned report). Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

Biggs, J. (2003) *Teaching for quality learning at university* (2nd ed.) Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.

Collier, J., & Esteban, R. (1999). Governance in the participative organisation: freedom, creativity and ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 21*(2/3),* 73–188.

De Jorio, R. (2005). Book review,of The Power of Women's Informal Networks: Lessons in Social Change from South Asia and West Africa, by Purkayastha, B., & Subramaniam, M. (Eds.). Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004. Retrieved 21 July, 2007, from web.cortland.edu/wagadu/Volume%202/Printable/dejorio.pdf.

Forgasz, H., & Leder, G. (2006). Academic Life: Monitoring Work Patterns and Daily Activities, accessed online Retrieved 8 August, 2006, from http://www.aare.edu.au/aer/online/0601b.pdf.

Goodyear, P. (2005). Education design and networked learning: Patterns, pattern language and design practice. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology, 21*(1), 82-101.

Harman, G. (2005) Australian social scientists and transition to a more commercial university environment, *Higher Education Research & Development*, *24*(1), 79-94.

Ibarra, H. (1993). Personal Networks of Women and Minorities in Management: A Conceptual Framework. *The Academy of Management Review*, *18*(1), 56-87.

Illing, D. (2006a). Go8 angered by research impact model *The Australian Higher Education*, 11 October, p. 25.

Illing, D. (2006b). Funding shakeout now inevitable *The Australian Higher Education*, 20 December, p. 19.

Jackson, S. (2003). *Interview for Networking for Women*. Retrieved 21 July, 2007, from http://www.newcomersnetwork.com/mel/oursay/expertadvice/netwkwom.php.

Johnson, C. (2001). A survey of current research on online communities of practice. *Internet and Higher Education*, *4*, 45–60.

Krause, K., Hartley, R., James, R., & McInnis, C. (2005). *The First Year Experience in Australian Universities: Findings from a decade of national studies.* Canberra: DEST. [Available online: http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au]

Laurillard, D. (2002). Rethinking university teaching: A conversational framework for the effective use of learning technologies. (2nd ed.). London: Routledge Falmer.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Macnamara, L. (2007). Casual staff pick up the slack. *The Australian Higher Education*, 28 February, p. 34.

Marginson, S. (2006). Dynamics of National and Global Competition in Higher Education. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, *52*(1), 1-39.

Marginson, S., & Considine, M. (2000). *The enterprise university: Power, governance and reinvention in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McInnis, C. (2000). *The Work Roles of Academics in Australian Universities*. Canberra, AGPS.

Pitkethly, A., & Prosser, M., (2001). The First Year Experience Project: a model for university-wide change. *Higher Education Research and Development 20*(2), 185 – 198.

Salancik, G. (1995). Wanted: A Good Network Theory of Organization. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *40*(2), 345-349.

Schapper, J. M., & Mayson, S. E. (2004). Internationalisation of curricula: An alternative to the taylorisation of academic work. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *26*(2), 189-205.

Sharrock, G. (2000). Why students are not (just) customers (and other reflections on Life After George). *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, *22*(2), 149-164.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. UK: Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.