

Task force looks at issues facing University women

By Julie Shippen
Of the Emerald

They meet once a week in small rooms around campus and they do a lot of talking about you behind your back. They especially like to talk about your problems — your needs, fears and wants.

"They" are the Women's Task Force, and they have made it their job to see that women are finding answers to the struggles associated with being a woman.

Created in late November by ASUO President Julie Davis, the group is a blend of women from nearly every facet of the female population. Members come from major student groups on campus and represent an assortment of academic interests and levels.

Although the many perspectives of these women often make for interesting debates on the issues, members believe the group's broad background should help in its community outreach efforts.

The group's basic functions are to collect and disseminate information and to organize the yearly women's symposium, which is sponsored by ASUO.

"Mainly we're going to address problems that women encounter in the University community," says Lois Day, task force member and president of the Student Bar Association.

The 11 particular areas the



Lois Day

group will be examining this year that concern women include: sexual harassment, comparable worth, women and economics, child care, and mental and physical violence against women.

"We felt violence against women is the most pressing issue," Day adds.

The subject of alternative lifestyles will also be discussed and included with the other topics of the women's symposium held each spring. The two-day event will feature films, speakers, self-defense demonstrations and workshops,

Day says, and will culminate in a "Take Back the Night" march.

"The purpose of the march is for women to walk together where they would never walk alone," she says.

A second symposium will be held later in mid-April and will examine the role of women in the workplace, Day adds.

"We wanted to reach out for new people. That's why we restructured the symposium to be more concentrated," says another member, Mary Kay Menard, who is also on the Incidental Fee Committee. "Our shape has changed quite a bit," she adds.

Davis says she hopes the task force will accomplish five things this year: identify current or potential women's issues, define long- and short-term goals to address those issues, coordinate a "quality" symposium, work within the group's \$4,000 budget, and keep a record of the year's work.

Task force members besides Day and Menard include Kim Freeburn, former Panhellenic president; Lynn Pinkney, co-director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance; Leah Juniper, a director of the Women's Referral and Resource Service; Diane Arnold, Ariel Friesner, and ASUO Executive members Davis, Marcia Schmaedick and Karin Keutzer.

Feminist promotes Freudian theory

Although feminists have long regarded Sigmund Freud with scorn, his psychoanalytic theories concerning the family should not be dismissed because they accurately describe traditional sexual attitudes in society, said University sociology Prof. Miriam Johnson Tuesday night.

"I believe that Freud's description of the Oedipus complex can be taken as a fable about the ideal typical middle-class family," Johnson told an audience of about 80 in the EMU Dad's Room.

"He over generalized to all family systems," Johnson said. "But to the extent that the so-called isolated, male-headed nuclear family is still viable on the scene, Freud's fable about it reflects psychic reality."

As such, Johnson said, Freud's theories are a valuable key to our understanding of incest, especially father-daughter incest, and the problem of female identity.

"In his distorted way," Freud understood

that a daughter in a patriarchal family is compelled to become psychologically bound to her father "until he hands her over to another man," Johnson said.

Freud was also the first to suspect that hysterical symptoms in women might be caused by their having been sexually molested by their fathers or close male relatives, she said.

Freud unfortunately had suppressed the publication of this theory, fearing that his colleagues would ridicule him, Johnson said.

Johnson's major criticism of Freud was that he assumed femininity meant only being passive and heterosexual. To Freud, a female was always "daddy's girl," she said.

"If it is not to be oppressive, psychoanalytic theory must come to terms with the fact that gender identity does not have to rest on either heterosexuality or dominance and subordination," Johnson said. "Women themselves are now constructing new definitions of what being a woman can mean."

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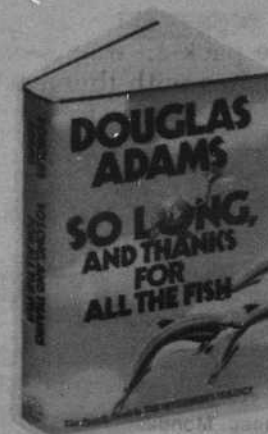
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