In Her Place *-a study of women's personal safety*
in boarding houses

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Abstract

The quality of life in Auckland boarding houses is unsatisfactory for males and females alike. The stressful lifestyles of many of the residents can contribute to an atmosphere that is both volatile and unpredictable. This thesis suggests that within such an environment it is women who are the most vulnerable. Due to both their (comparative) physical weakness and to the specific characteristics of gender roles it is women who are most likely to be victimised within a community under stress. Therefore it is considered necessary to apply a gendered focus and analysis of the boarding house experience.

This thesis also maintains that there are a number of factors that have operated to conceal the experience and realities of women in boarding houses. These range from the construction of myths and stereotypes, the gender bias of previous research, the lack of protection in current legislation and the low reportage rate of the women themselves. Concealment of the women who are the most severely affected by abuse is maintained by medication and by the fact that access to these women is frequently controlled by a caregiver who may also be the abuser. It is these, and other dynamics, that have maintained the invisibility of the particular predicament of women who live in boarding houses.

The thesis also positions itself within the debate on the reform and privatisation of both the housing and health "markets" in New Zealand. It examines various local and central government policies and how they have impacted on boarding houses. It also explores the position of boarding houses within the construct of 'private' and 'public' realms. It is maintained that those in authority are able to abdicate their responsibilities because boarding houses occupy an ill-defined position within the public/private debate.

The research study component of this thesis seeks to explore the operatives of safety or security in the lives of women who live in boarding houses. It aims to identify the physical, emotional and sexual vulnerability that women experience in relation to their accommodation. The study aims to define the level of disempowerment these women experience as a result of their housing environment.

Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

Assent - and you are sane -
Demur - you're straight away dangerous -
And handled with a chain

-Emily Dickinson

Chapter One

Setting the Scene

A Brief History of the Boarding House

For those of us who live in central Auckland, the old run-down boarding houses that are dotted along the streets of Freeman's Bay and Herne Bay are a familiar sight. Typically, they are large Edwardian weatherboard 'mansions' that were once home to the rich and noteworthy of Auckland's 'society'. Others had been purpose built to house the workers who flooded into the city in the latter half of last century. Demand for boarding house accommodation decreased after the second world war as the government facilitated home ownership and the local authority zoned its inhabitants into the suburbs. As a result of the decrease in demand for boarding houses, their owners were left with large ageing buildings in desperate need of repair but with little incentive to outlay the requisite capital. Financial institutions were reluctant to invest money in an area of the housing market that had apparently 'had its day'.

By the 1960s Ponsonby, Freeman's Bay and Herne Bay had become associated with poverty, crime, drunkenness and violence. The boarding houses were considered to be the locus of this predicament. As there is very little literature available that profiles the boarding house residents during this period, it is difficult to ascertain who was living there and why. One might speculate that many were persons who chose not to conform to societal pressures to marry and 'settle down' - those with some prescience that nirvana did not await them in suburbia. For others, whose nirvana had gradually transmogrified into an hallucinatory nightmare, the boarding house offered a means of escape. Some, their hearts and minds ravaged by their own private holocaust, found unique ways to keep reality at bay. Still others greeted their melancholy with liquor. The institution of flatting was yet to become an acceptable form of living arrangement for strangers - the boarding house appeared to be the only real alternative. Typically, they were seen as places for misfits and non-conformists or for those 'down on their luck'.

The 1980s were witness to the property boom and the gentrification of Auckland's inner city suburbs. Many of the boarding houses in Ponsonby were demolished to make way for development. In Herne Bay and Freeman's Bay many of the houses

were converted to single family occupancy and transformed to their original magnificence. The momentum of gentrification jostled the poor out of these suburbs. They were replaced by the 'dinks' and the 'yuppies' of the eighties and those more delicately described as the 'cafe set' in the nineties. Where those who were dispossessed of their boarding houses went is open to conjecture. Certainly no provision was made to rehouse them by those who orchestrated and benefited from their demise.

Current Profile

Some of the old boarding houses have survived in spite of the vehemence of the property market. But they are not well. They are dismal, rundown places. Rotting weather boards, garnished with flaking paint, form a canvas for broken window panes haphazardly 'mended' with warped plywood. Rusty, intermittent guttering that has long since ceased to serve its original purpose, tentatively grasps at the eaves. Balustrades and banisters lean on rakish angles and flail in the breeze. The owners have obviously given up on maintenance years ago. The gardens are equally unkempt. Rusty, iron fence-railings lie hidden amongst the weeds, along with the mangy cats, discarded cigarette packets and lone, sodden socks. Sometimes a single ornate Victorian gatepost stands vigil in the driveway, in solitary defiance against the ironies of history. Although no gate swings off its rusted hinges, we can almost hear the creak of the carriage and the shouts of the horsemen.

Who would live in such a place we might ask? If we look behind the discoloured net curtains hanging in the window, or venture into the dim, dank hallway we might find them, basking in the flickering blue light of the television set. If these buildings are unwell on the outside, they are positively ailing on the inside. For these houses are 'home' to people whose often tragic situation has come to resemble the despair and hopelessness of the buildings in which they live. They are the people who have become faceless and anonymous as a result of the collapse of New Zealand's welfare system. Their very tangible problems - poverty, housing and healthcare - have become subsumed in stereotypes of the 'ex pysch. patient', the drunk' and the 'bag-lady'. In the creation of myths and stereotypes we have dehumanised human beings. By focusing on the behaviour of the people, instead of on the policies and processes that have contributed to their demise, we have been able to distance ourselves from responsibility.

Women and Boarding Houses

If the realities of those who live in boarding houses are concealed behind the facades of public hysteria and nonchalance, then the realities of women who make up a significant proportion of this population are even more obscured. For in effect, the paucity of information on the boarding house experience, combined with the gender bias of this literature, has created a ҳ scant and one dimensional image. This image is typically male. In the moving, conscience-pricking <u>Listener</u> articles of the late eighties and in the provocative glossy photo-essays of the nineties <u>Metro</u>, the gaze is nearly always directed on the male subject. The bewhiskered, overcoated, lonely fellow - down on his luck, isolated and alone in his room with his own private demons for company.

This androgynous gaze is echoed in the overseas literature on incipient homelessness in titles like 'Down on their Luck' and 'The Forgotten Men'. Invariably the plight of women is either totally ignored or presumed to be the same as that of their male counterparts. Although the majority of research studies, both local and overseas, record whether the subject is male or female, this differential is scarcely put to any further use. Seldom do females appear in the same number as males. Seldom, if ever, are the variables analysed according to sex. Seldom do questions seek to query the particular needs of females.

There have been recent moves, however, to reposition the role of women in the housing debate. Within this paradigm research is emerging that attempts to reveal the different issues faced by men and women in boarding houses - isolation vs privacy (Deacon et al 1995); the specific needs of homeless women (Watson 1986; Stoner 1983; Kilgour 1989); the reasons for women's invisibility (Merves 1992; Leavitt and Saegert 1990); their understanding of 'home' (Tomas and Dittmar 1995); the effects of housing policy on women (Leavitt and Saegert 1990); and the construction of myths and stereotypes (Merves 1992; Golden 1992).

It is Merves (1992) who may come close to explaining the invisibility of homeless women, both in the literature and in society, when she says - *a homeless woman is more of a social outcast than a man because she violates the broader prescriptions of the proper role for women.* Men are commonly seen as down on their luck or fallen upon hard times - they are mere victims of circumstance. In passing the destitute male on the street we peer inside him for a sign of the decent healthy man he once was. If it had not been for the cruel blows of misfortune, incompetence or folly, we tell

ourselves, he would not be in his current predicament. The homeless or transient woman is viewed differently. We often view her body first and judge her strange, misfitting clothes. Her dishevelled appearance blemishes the countenance of femininity. Fancy letting herself go we think. We do not peer inside for a glimpse of the woman she once was. This cannot be some mans wife, some child's mother. She defies social prescription. She is a rule unto herself. She had chosen her plight - opted out of the social equation. Her appearance and behaviour challenges our understanding and beliefs about what constitutes appropriate conduct for women.

The preoccupation with gender roles in this country has been defined by James (1989) as the 'cult of domesticity'. To be 'domestic' is synonymous with being female. Through the cult of domesticity women's lives are structured as privatised and dependent. Men are constructed as public beings whereby they become providers and protectors. It is through this framework that we can start to glimpse how the invisibility and the vulnerability of women in boarding houses has been maintained.

In his story of life in an Auckland boarding house, Ian Middleton (1989) uses three female protagonists. All three women's preoccupations are described in relation to men - one is a prostitute; one is escaping a marriage[1] and the other, the boarding house manager, is a mother-figure to all. All three have abandoned the traditional role of wife and mother. The three male figures, by comparison, are all defined in relation to their public working lives. Their private relationships, although made apparent, are subsidiary to their main preoccupations in life. Middleton's text makes manifest the particular predicament of women in boarding houses as theorised by James: a) their lives are described in relation to men; b) they are seen only in terms of their domestic role; and c) their role is privatised while that of the males is made public.

Wilson suggests that the city represents the iconoclasm of the male/public female/private dichotomy. She maintains that cities are essentially male domains and that the presence of women therein represents chaos and disorder - *women have become an irruption in the city, a symptom of disorder, and a problem: the Sphinx in the city.* By shunning the prescripts of suburbia and claiming the independence (albeit minimal) of the boarding house, women rattle the foundations of their prescribed social role. Is it any wonder that the state refuses to intervene to alleviate their particular distress and vulnerability? For to dismantle the operatives of fear within the boarding

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[1] It is only through literally curling up in a dark room and willing herself to death that Jennifer can relieve herself of her domestic role. Although written only 6 years ago Jennifer echoes the dilemma of the character created by Charlotte Perkins Gilman more than 7 decades ago. In The Yellow Wallpaper the heroine can only escape the horrors of her domestic situation by going mad.

house would require the dismantling of the entrenched gender roles upon which many operatives of the state are both constructed and dependant .

It is the gendered roles of masculinity and femininity that contribute to women's vulnerability in boarding houses. This explains why the many issues that face women in boarding houses are those that have been traditionally seen as private issues, beyond the reach of public intervention. Obvious omissions in the recently amended Residential Tenancies Act have reinforced the powerlessness of women who live outside the established norms. Their main dilemma is a lack of privacy from public (male) violence. It is ironic that this should be classified as a private issue. In 1929 Virginia Woolf advocated the necessity for women to have, at the very least, a 'room of one's own'. Inherent in her theme was the acknowledgment of the pervasive intrusion of male demands on women's ability to conduct themselves autonomously.

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Thesis Layout

The remainder of this thesis is divided into three parts.

Part 1 is divided into five chapters that examine the social structures and issues which underpin and substantiate the predicament of women in boarding houses.

Chapter two states why we should focus on women within the homeless debate and establishes the necessity for a gendered appraisal of the boarding house situation. It examines how entrenched beliefs and expectations about gender-appropriate behaviour can impact negatively on women's emotional and physical space.

Chapter Three builds on themes introduced in the previous chapter by discussing the public/private dualism of gendered roles in New Zealand. It is argued that women's lives, in a gendered society, are domestic and private. Their concerns are frequently trivialised or seen to be outside the realm of public intervention. The maintenance of a false distinction between public violence and private violence is the bedrock of women's vulnerability. Women who conform to the domestic role of wife and mother are given sufficient protection to enable them to continue in their role. When women choose to live outside of their specified gender role they are denied all support and protection.

Chapter Four focuses on issues of safety. Although the quality of life in Auckland boarding houses is unsatisfactory for males and females alike, this thesis suggests that within such an environment it is women who are the most vulnerable. It explores the various dynamics that operate within the boarding house which make women particularly unsafe. It also looks at how fear can manifest itself in a precautionary behaviour which facilitates the exclusion of women from the public domain. This chapter also reveals how the legislation that has been designed to protect tenants in New Zealand from exploitation does not extend to women who live in boarding houses.

Chapter Five seeks to explain the invisibility of women in boarding houses. It is argued that a number of critical factors have evolved within the boarding house culture that has prevented the particular plight of women becoming predominant in the housing debate. Most significantly, the paucity and brevity of previous research has facilitated presumptions about the heterogeneity of the boarding house population. This has actively concealed the needs of women tenants. Less overt processes are equally significant in their ability to maintain women's invisibility. These include the propagation of myths and stereotypes surrounding homeless women and notions of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' victim. The code of anonymity that has traditionally underpinned the boarding house culture, alongside the questionable rule of 'no narking', ensures that women are neither seen nor heard.
This chapter also examines the ways in which women's mental illness has been defined and constructed through history with reference to boarding house tenants.

Part 11 is presented in one chapter that examines the impacts of policies that have emerged from the restructuring and privatisation of New Zealand's state apparatus.

Chapter Six focuses specifically on housing issues. The abdication of the New Zealand government from the provision of affordable, secure housing has had dire consequences for those in need. The reform of local government has compounded this impact. In Auckland, a rapidly growing population, combined with the gentrification of the inner city, has lead to the demise of the boarding house and the deterioration of conditions for boarding house dwellers. Of particular concern is the withdrawal of Auckland City Council from the provision of community housing. This chapter looks at current provisions for 'assessing' boarding houses and questions their ability to provide adequate protection. It seeks to reveal the multitude of stresses placed on the individual by a mental health disability and how this increases a woman's vulnerability in a boarding house.

Part 111 presents the research study conducted in 1996 of women's experiences of personal safety in Auckland boarding houses. It is presented in 4 chapters.

Chapter seven provides the rationale, aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter eight describes the methodology and the research process.

Chapter nine presents the results.

Chapter ten concludes

Chapter eleven makes recommendations.

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Defining the Terms

BOARDING HOUSE - For the purposes of this study a boarding house is defined as: an establishment providing serviced or unserviced furnished single or double room accommodation for at least five unrelated persons. Meals or a shared kitchen may be provided. Bathroom and toilet facilities are also shared. Accommodation is provided for short term, semi permanent or permanent residents who are capable of independent living. Outside support services may be called upon by some residents.[2]

HOMELESS - The terms 'homeless' and 'incipient homeless' will occasionally be used in this thesis to refer to women who live in boarding houses. It suggests that although the women are not totally without shelter, they may be living in a situation that is substandard, insecure or temporary and where the conditions are unsuited to their immediate needs. The implication is that there is no other alternative but to put up with the inadequacy or the oppressiveness of their immediate situation. As used in this thesis, the terms 'homeless' and 'incipient homeless' draw upon the meanings and definitions developed in previous research: -

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[2] Developed from the definition in Sole and Robinson (1988). The authors acknowledge the difficulty researchers have had in defining a boarding house. Their definition is built upon that described in Section 636 of the New Zealand Local Government Act 1974 and those described in various overseas reports.

1.	In the Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988) Campbell Roberts defined 'privacy and safety' as a measure of adequate housing .... *including safety from violence, incest and harassment from inside and outside the household.* Roberts claimed that where standards of adequacy are not met, then a person is homeless.

2.	In defining incipient homelessness Kearns (1992) claims that ..... *although these people are currently housed in the strictest sense of the term, under no circumstances can we consider that they have a suitable home.*

3.	The Australian National Housing Strategy[3] has defined serious housing disadvantage as:
- trapped in situations of domestic violence or sexual abuse, with few alternative housing options available.
- a tendency to become involved in unsuitable domestic relationships in order to gain shelter.
- denial of choice in and control over one's housing.
- frequent relocation which denies women opportunities to improve their economic prospects.
- living in seriously sub-standard or over-crowded housing when no affordable options are available.

"The loss of housing is the first step towards exclusion from society. A person who has no home is liable to fall into a spiral of degradation of all aspects of her living conditions, a spiral from which it is very difficult for her to extricate herself. It is virtually impossible for a person of no fixed address to find lasting employment and to maintain a minimum degree of hygiene necessary both for health and some degree of social integration."

International Federation Terre des Hommes,   August 1992

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[3] The National Women's Consultative Council in collaboration with the National Women's Housing Caucus conducted a series of extensive consultations throughout Australia between October 1991 and February 1992 on the housing needs of women and children. This definition is drawn from the report on the outcome of the consultation.

Part One

Chapter Two

Women, Gender and Homelessness

In Auckland the housing situation is worse than in other urban areas, making it likely that women alone in this city experience significant but unrecognised housing need (Kilgour, 1989).

Why Should We Focus on Homeless Women?

Kearns and Smith have argued that housing is a key indicator of inequality in New Zealand society but that definitions of what is and what is not adequate housing will differ for various groups within the population. Within this framework they claim that the interactions between gender and housing conditions need more delicate analysis. In their study of housing stressors they unearthed a 'startling degree of difference' between the male and female respondents, with the men reporting markedly better housing and mental health (Kearns and Smith, 1993). Within the North American literature, Wekerle (1980) has reported that the problems of homeless women differ substantially from those of homeless men. Crystal (1984) had previously outlined the heterogeneity of the homeless population and the importance of distinguishing between subgroups, while Deacon et al's (1995) recent U.K. study raises concerns about the applicability of studies of male homelessness to the realities of their female counterparts. Within the Australasian context, Kilgour (1989) not only stressed the need for appropriate resourcing of women alone, but also claimed that women alone are not an homogenous group .... *but a diverse group with diverse need.* Her views that women's housing status is often determined by their relations with men was echoed by Watson (1989) who claimed that an understanding of the gender division of labour is essential to an understanding of women's housing needs. Typically the needs of homeless women have fallen prey to the construction of monodimensional images. Stoner's (1983) study of women in the United States suggests that women suffer not only from presumptions that their needs are the same as men, but that their needs are the same as each other.

Despite the substantial body of literature concerning male homelessness there has been very little investigation into the particular dynamics and catalysts of female

homelessness. Speaking of the U.S. situation, Stoner claims this neglect has resulted in homeless women receiving inadequate services and attention and that research is needed that defines women's specific problems and needs - *the apparent systematic avoidance of dealing with homeless women in research and literature suggests that women receive harsher judgment and less adequate services than men even at this marginal level of society* (Stoner, 1983). Because women have been less visible than men they have been perceived as being less needy. Merves suggests that they have traditionally received little attention *because they are less numerous than men, their needs are thought to be less great, and their worthiness as service recipients is questionable* (Merves, 1992). Her claim that women in the United States continue to be victimised by a lack of services is supported by Stoner who claims that this is because women are less feared and less threatening than men (Stoner, 1983).

Crystals study of homeless men and women in New York shelters found a much higher incidence of psychiatric treatment amongst women than men. Conversely, it found higher incidences of imprisonment amongst the men than the women. Women were twice as likely to be assessed by the interviewer as having a current psychiatric problem (Crystal, 1984). In relation to these findings it has been suggested that the ascribing of social roles legitimates different forms of behaviour for men and women (Merves, 1992) wherein men are more likely to express their deviancy as criminals while women's is expressed as depression. Women and men are regulated differently - women are positioned within the psychiatric discourse, men are positioned within the criminal discourse (Ussher, 1991). Women are seen as mad - men are seen as bad. Other American theorists have maintained that women are declared mentally unwell when they do not conform to their social role (Chesler, 1972; Ussher, 1991; Golden, 1992). They also speculate that because it is the poor who are more likely to be processed through the mental health system, women are much more likely to be fall into this category (Golden, 1992). Merves points out that this focus on mental illness makes homelessness an individual problem, a woman's failure, rather than an economic or housing problem (Merves, 1992).

Homeless men have been the subject of research and inquiry for many years, particularly in the United States. Although some studies have emphasised the pathological aspects of their existence, others have sought to retain and convey a romanticised notion of the independent spirit. Seldom, if ever, is the homeless woman romanticised. Frequently the images surrounding her are negative, female references - shopping bag lady, madwoman, prostitute etc. Although it is frequently claimed that 'tramps' and 'hobos' (always male) have rejected their gendered role of provider and

family man (Franck, 1988), seldom is there any moral judgement placed on this choice. Similarly, men in New Zealand who late last century opted out of the family role (James and Saville-Smith, 1989), while seen as cavalier or irresponsible, were never deemed to be immoral or unnatural in the way that women are perceived to be when they choose to detach themselves from familial relationships. While male 'disaffiliation' is viewed pathologically and objectively within the literature, women who abandon their roles of wives and mothers are seen as unnatural, immoral and emotionally disturbed.

Merves claims that disaffiliation has long been cited in the literature on homelessness as an explanatory factor. However, she has joined other authors in questioning its applicability to homeless women (Crystal, 1984; Watson, 1989; Merves, 1992). Their research concludes that homeless women do not fit into the disaffiliation model that assumes a lack of involvement in social or familial roles or a desire to transgress societies norms. In both studies women were statistically far more likely to have maintained an extended relationship than men.

In most studies of male homelessness little attention is given to the status of men in regard to their either having had children or currently maintaining a relationship with children. It is obviously assumed that they have few or no ties to children. Crystal (1984) confirms that children do not appear to be a salient factor in the lives of homeless men, but that this is not the case for women. His study found that 53% of all women studied had given birth to at least one child. This does not necessarily imply that homeless men are less likely to have children. It may merely suggest that some men are more likely or able to detach themselves from the responsibilities and bonds of fatherhood. Within Western societies it appears that a man is permitted to father a child and to 'move on'. The same permission is not granted to women. The relationship between mother and child is viewed to be innate and a women who chooses to detach herself from the relationship (outside of the state's adoption processes) is considered morally reprehensible.

Women's Economic Position

An understanding of women's economic position is vital to an understanding of homelessness. Much has been written on the feminisation of poverty in New Zealand and how this burden falls disproportionately on female-headed households (Hyman, 1995; Kelsey, 1995; James and Saville-Smith, 1989). The feminisation of poverty has particular significance for homeless women. Stoner's (1983) research in America

found that unemployment and poverty are major antecedents to literal homelessness. This was supported by Watson (1989) who claimed that women's inferior position in the Australian labour market was intrinsically tied to their inferior position in the housing market. Although single women are concentrated in lower paid jobs they must compete for housing with higher paid single men and two-income households (Saegert, 1988). The Royal Commission on Social Policy in New Zealand found that *there is still a significant inequality in the position of women in regard to housing.* Two key reasons cited were that women's incomes on the whole are lower than their male counterparts and that women generally experience difficulty obtaining money from the private finance market (Roberts, 1988; Watson, 1988; Thorns, 1988).

Women's inferior economic position can be clearly linked to systematic discrimination in employment. Women are concentrated in the poorest quality occupations in terms of pay, conditions, security of employment and opportunities for advancement. Despite the 1972 Equal Pay Act, in 1991 53% of women in New Zealand had incomes under $15000 in comparison to 37% of men (Hyman, 1995). As at February 1996 female average earnings were 76% of male average weekly earnings.[4] The inequality between men's and women's wages is most apparent in the employment sectors with the lowest wage rates. However, across the entire employment sector females are generally paid less consistently when their qualifications are the same as males, and tend to have flatter earning curves (single women compared to single men) over their careers (Hyman, 1995). It might also be speculated that major advances in technology have lead to considerable redundancies in traditional women's occupations - operators, bank clerks, reception and service work. This has been exacerbated by the restructuring of the economy which has not only resulted in a loss of jobs for women but has catalysed a major trend in which men are now competing with women for traditional female occupations.

Limited opportunities in paid labour can be seen to be directly connected to women's association with the home. The service and caring occupations that traditionally employ women mirror the tasks women do at home (Saegert, 1988). Accordingly there is a tendency for these jobs to be underpaid because it is assumed that a) it is work that comes naturally to women and b) they get intrinsic rewards from it (James & Saville-Smith, 1989). The welfare system reinforces the dichotomy between women's and men's work by providing support to women via their roles as wives and mothers. This is predominantly via the Domestic Purposes Benefit. By contrast, men's support is invariably linked to employment via the Unemployment Benefit and Accident

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[4] Statistics New Zealand Quarterly Employment Survey

Compensation. The work women do in the home is not recognised in terms of its value to the economy and is left out of measures of economic value such as GDP. It might be speculated that the lack of attachment of a market-based value to women's domestic work leads to the Domestic Purpose Benefit commonly being regarded as 'bludging', as opposed to deserved or earned income.

Despite the popular misconception of the predominance of the nuclear family, the growth of the female-headed household continues to rise. Fewer women are getting married and more are opting to raise children in households without men.[5] More than 80% of single parent households in New Zealand are headed by a female, 78% of whom have personal incomes below $20,000 per annum.[6] Social and economic policy ensure that these households are seriously disadvantaged. The contraction of the welfare state has lessened their options. The withdrawal of the state from housing provision, and the shift to market rents on state houses has resulted in a shortage in Auckland of adequate and affordable housing for those on limited incomes. In his draft paper on housing and poverty in New Zealand, Stephens (1996) shows that single-parent households are the most acutely and dramatically affected by housing costs than any other type of household. This has corresponded with a decrease in funding to community welfare organisations at a time when they are experiencing increased demands for their services. Women currently appear in higher numbers in all statistical indicators of poverty - income, unemployment and benefit dependence (Hyman, 1994).

Why Is There A Need For A Gendered Response?

Three decades ago it was suggested that the way people behave, the lifestyles they live, and the way they organise their activities in the physical environment are socially constructed (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Within this paradigm it was claimed that behaviour and relationships previously considered innate, inherent or a product of individual choice are in fact heavily influenced by socially determined expectations about appropriate human behaviour. Within this paradigm feminist critique has sought to position the notion of gender as a social construct that serves to dictate appropriate behaviour for men and for women (Oakley, Friedan). More recently it has been claimed that notions of gender and gender roles have determined the physical design of the urban environment in a way that generate and reinforce these roles (Saegert, 1988; Wekerle; 1980; Leavitt, 1992; Franck, 1988). Within this framework it can be seen

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[5] Statistics New Zealand - All About Women in New Zealand
[6] Statistics New Zealand - 1991 Census, New Zealanders at Home

that planning rules and policies can affirm dominant patriarchal structures and *legitimise social norms in the form of regulations which penetrate everyday life* (Dixon, 1991). A gendered focus on housing provision therefore, seeks to ascertain how the social construction of gender creates differences in the manner in which men and women can access housing.

However, Franck (1988) has warned of the danger of using gender to refer to specific roles carried out by males and females, thereby creating the notion that the roles are fixed and unalterable. Gender, she maintains, is an analytical structure, and should only be used when it stands for a structural feature of the social situation (Franck, 1988). Just as Watson (1988) warns against the polarising of the public/private divide, so too does Franck encourage a systemic analysis of gender:

It emphasises the systematic links between the creation of two genders and the sexual division of labour. It focuses attention on relations between genders, social process and social change rather than on fixed, unchanging positions of single individuals. It allows for the consideration of power and conflict and it is clearly an analytical construct and thereby less likely than roles to become reified. It makes it nearly impossible to consider one gender in isolation from the other: 'system' indicates the interrelations of both (Franck, 1988).

There has been considerable debate concerning the roots of women's inequality. The feminist literature of the past three decades has generally been divided between radical feminism and Marxist socialism. Radical feminism views women's subordination as the fundamental form of domination in all societies wherein hierarchical power relationships between men and women permeate every aspect of society (Mitchell, 1977; Daly, 1986). In contrast, the Marxist socialist approach claims that male domination is structured by the capitalist division of labour (Engels, 1976). Within the women and housing debate Sprague (1991) has suggested that it is better to look at how gender relations are currently organised to maintain the status quo and that *concern with how oppression arose may be less productive than concern with how it might be changed.* However, although it must be acknowledged that femininity and masculinity are historically mutable it would be naive to attempt to view women's current position outside of its historical context. In their criteria for the social assessment of policy Haigh and Hucker (1995) claim that social assessment must look backward as well as forward because *the past brings with it obligations and promises. Actions that breach them are a source of significant social damage.* Peel (1995) claims that planning always looks to the past as well as to the future but notes that the issue becomes who defines the past *and whose version of local problems and solutions*

is confirmed and legitimised as authentic 'community opinion'. When women do not occupy positions of power in local government, either as elected representatives or as paid officers, history is likely to present the experiences of a male elite.

Within a gendered analysis of the built environment the suburb or 'suburbia' is often cited as the locus of women's gendered angst. The physical setting of the suburb creates the space whereby the social activities of men and women can be separated and made manifest. The expectation is that women will carry out home-making and child rearing in the home in the suburbs and men will pursue wage-earning activities outside the home in the city (Franck, 1988). More importantly the environment will be organised in a way that supports wage earning activities (Saegert, 1988) and serves not only to restrict women's activities to the suburbs, but makes it equally difficult for her to have full interaction with the public environment (Ferguson, 1994). In her formulation of the androgynous city Saegert suggests that it would be one in which *the values historically associated with women's pursuits would have equal priority in the development of city forms as those associated with stereotypically masculine values* (Saegert, 1988). The schism that has resulted out of the development of gendered male and female roles within the physical environment is frequently referred to as the public/private divide.

Chapter Three

The Public/Private Divide

Over the past twenty years literature has emerged that represents the urban environment in terms of its gender opposites - the city is presented as public and masculine while the suburbs are portrayed as private and feminine (Saegert, 1980; Wekerle, 1980; Wilson, 1991). Within this paradigm human behaviour is segregated into male and female roles whereby women are isolated into the private 'unproductive' sphere of the family while men are active and dominant in the public 'productive' world of work and politics (Wekerle, 1980). Within such a framework it is suggested that the city is the realm of males wherein major public decisions and actions are evolved via intellect, politics and economy. It is the place where males construct the public world. In contrast suburbia is seen as the antithesis to the public world of the male. It is the place where women reside and tend to the private needs of the male. A man's home is his castle away from the fortress of public work. It is viewed as a place of respite and relaxation. The domestic world of suburbia and femininity are each other's raison d'etre. Such polarisation has created particular difficulties for women. In particular it has resulted in a built environment that makes it difficult for women to make real choices between domestic, private activities and public, productive ones (Saegert, 1980). Lack of employment, transportation and adequate childcare have ensured women's adherence to their domestic role.

The dominance of the nuclear family and the single-family home in New Zealand history has been paramount (James and Saville-Smith, 1989). The development of New Zealand's housing policy this century reinforced women's domestic role in suburbia and ensured that little, if any, housing alternatives existed for women who sought an alternative. The development, late last century, of the single detached family home on its private piece of land in the suburbs contributed to the privatisation of women's lives and lifestyles (Fergusen, 1994). Being distanced from commercial, educational and other facilities and services, often in combination with inadequate public transport, served to reinforce women's isolation and the private nature of 'family' life and women's role of wife and mother (Fava, 1980). New Zealand's housing policies have traditionally focused on the family[7] at the expense of other households,

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[7] Previously this was predominantly the traditional nuclear family. However, since the late 1980's the focus of housing policy has been adjusted to include the needs of solo parents.

in particular the single person household. *The central focus of housing policy is to ensure that families who are in need of assistance.....are provided with housing ....* [Minister of Housing, quoted in Roberts, C. (1988)].

Other key pieces of New Zealand's legislation have reinforced the private nature of the family. The Domestic Violence Act (prior to the July 1996 amendment) affirmed that assaulting one's spouse was essentially different to assaulting a stranger. The Marital Property Act legislates for the allocation of property upon dissolution of the partnership. However, it does not facilitate the access of women to income and property within the marriage. For example there is no legislation to ensure that the income and assets of the partnership are earned and maintained in both partner's names.

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Prior to this century a woman accessing the public realm without a male was, in many cases, considered immoral - her appearance often provoking anger or violence (Wekerle, 1980). Wilson (1991) maintains that the sophisticated urban consciousness which reached its peak in central Europe in the early twentieth century was an essentially male consciousness wherein ......*sexual unease and the pursuit of sexuality outside the constraints of the family were one of its major preoccupations.* With the confinement of Victorian women to the private sphere it became undesirable - even indecent - for women to walk the streets unaccompanied by a man. The presence of women in the city was seen as a problem of order and posed a general moral and political threat. *Urban life is based on the perpetual struggle between routinised order and pleasurable anarchy, the male-female dichotomy* (Wilson, 1991). The open street with its lack of boundaries created a freedom which was perceived to create promiscuity and offered sexual experience - in the city the forbidden becomes possible and accessible. The city enabled the creation of the good woman/bad woman scission. A good woman was not a public woman. The good woman in the city was always exposed to the danger that her virtue and inherent purity would be tainted by the implicit sexuality of the city - w*oman is present in the city as temptress; whore; fallen woman; lesbian, but also as virtuous womanhood in danger, as heroic womanhood who triumphs over temptation and tribulation* (Wilson, 1991). The creation of the term 'street-walker' to refer to women who exchange sexual activities for money reinforces the general attitude that a women alone on public streets is a 'bad' woman.

Studies of the public-private paradigm have tended to focus on the private world of women in suburbia, but only recently is research emerging on women's experience in the public environment (Wekerle, 1980; Little, 1994; Hayden, 1995). Today it is still difficult for women to access some public spaces alone. The sexual objectification of women's bodies serves to restrict and control women's daily activities and the spaces they wish to utilise. Through the fear of rape and violence women are denied access to specific public places at specific times. Some places are only accessible to women of a certain social status. However, most places are accessible to women in the company of a man. As Wekerle (1980) says, women are frequently given the message that they are out of place. This creates pressures for women who must be present, to remain unseen. Women who are homeless or whose lives revolve around use of the city streets constantly face moral judgement and criticism. Unlike males, they must attempt to conduct their activities in public whilst simultaneously remaining invisible. The public private/divide has particular relevance to ongoing research into women's homelessness in New Zealand. In particular, it is important to establish the relationship, if any, between the public/private construct of the physical environment and the level of mobility of homeless women. Are homeless women less likely to be sleeping out (public) than their male counterparts, or are they more likely to be spending a few nights sleeping over at a friends house (private, domestic)?

The physical design of the city has supported the public/private divide and placed restrictions on women's ability to access the public realm. Wilson goes so far as to suggest that the town planning movement emerged as an organised campaign to exclude woman and children from *this infernal urban space* (Wilson, 1991). Research is emerging that shows women's experience of the urban environment is substantially different to men's and that current urban design practices create serious disadvantages for women (Wekerle, 1980; Franck, 1988; Ritzdorf, 1989). The emphasis upon 'zoning' within district planning processes has been particularly instrumental in exacerbating the public-private divide. Most significantly it separates home and work. Women's unpaid work within homes that are specifically zoned into residential-only zones creates time constraints that makes it difficult for them to access the public world of employment (Palm & Pred, 1974; Watson, 1989). Access to adequate transport and childcare are also seriously constrained by specialist zoning. While men go off to integrate with others in the public life of the city women are isolated in the suburbs. Zoning also prevents the construction of low-cost family units or the siting of refuges or community houses. Huxley has asserted that zoning is concerned with .... *the creation of subjects* and is linked to a *complex set of discourses about how the characteristics and activities of [a] population should be understood.* She

maintains that zoning is a mechanism by which new meanings and discourses are both created and resisted over time.

Research shows that women who moved to the suburbs felt more isolated and alone than their husbands who had access to both a place of work and a place of respite (Wekerle, 1980; Franck, 1988) In Saegert's (1988) study of male and female urban and suburban dwellers it was found that only the suburban male was most satisfied with suburban living whereas women were the least satisfied. The urban environment offered most lifestyle options for women whilst the suburban environment offered her the least. The study found that women in the suburbs were forced to choose between the private world of the home and the outside world - *suburban residences tend to isolate women from involvement outside the home, thus unhappily reinforcing the real and symbolic distinctions between the private, domestic female world and the public, productive male world* (Saegert, 1988). Women are also more likely to see their homes as a personal expression of their identities whereas men saw it more as just a physical space to be in (Saegert, 1988; Franck, 1988). It is not certain whether men define themselves or express their identities in the public space via their work place. It may be they don't construct their identities via any physical setting (Franck, 1988). It would be interesting to note whether the increase in male unemployment and the relatively recently phenomenon of men taking on childcare roles has changed the way males perceive the home.

However, Saegert (1980) is anxious to point out that the public private divisions as defined in earlier feminist analysis may be a little too simplified. She claims that the past two decades have created major changes to employment, gender roles and the structure of economies *the demographic shift in the location of residences and workplaces, as well as the great increase in female labour force participation in the last decade, suggest that at least on some levels, this separation is breaking down.* Within the Australasian context Watson (1989) and Huxley (1996) have also claimed that the dichotomies between public and private and productive and unproductive are by no means clear. Watson (1989) argues for an analysis of the interconnections between home, work and community. Otherwise, by maintaining two distinct spheres we reinforce the separation of home and work. Huxley contends that the indicators of social polarisation are *far from empirically verifiable and there is considerable debate about the existence of polarisation and its urban effects.* She suggests that global economic restructuring has given rise to diverse configurations of resource allocation and utilisation that manifest themselves in myriad social, cultural and spatial forms.

Notions of class, race and ethnicity are all relevant to an understanding of the public/private divide. Not only will they impact on the demographic composition of both the city and the suburbs but they also influence how relevant the split is to different groups of women. For the blue collar worker, isolation within the suburban home may well be a luxury she cannot afford. For her, the problems might be trying to balance paid employment with her domestic duties. For the Pacific Islander, access to mixed-use activity areas or child care facilities may not be as important as access to family, church and community. For the urban Maori, the issues may be about maintaining links with a rural homeland.

It is also important to acknowledge the vast difference that may exist between the American situation and that of New Zealand. While the large American cities have had large populations of poor and black communities concentrated in central urban areas, their suburbs have been occupied by white middle-class neighbourhoods. By comparison the development in New Zealand of a state housing policy facilitated suburban home-ownership for all (nuclear) families regardless of income. This resulted in an overwhelming predominance of the single, detached family home and a huge diversity of socio-economic status within every suburb. New Zealander's prided themselves on their classless society and their welfare state. It might be speculated that the demographic formations that have (and will) develop out of these historical formations will be distinctly different.

Whether Saegert's assertion that a strong and intimate link, as opposed to a gap, has emerged between the domestic and public spheres can be applied to the New Zealand context is open to debate and conjecture. Although demographic changes in household and employment composition have lessened the extreme polarity of the public/private divide, it is questionable whether they work together in a mutual operation as the word 'linking' assumes. It is frequently women's energy that bridges the gap and which constantly struggles to negotiate the spatial and temporal divide. The public world of the male has constantly failed to reach out to embrace the private world of the female - it is women who have constantly applied pressure to make the urban public environment more accessible (Wekerle, 1980). Suffice to say that the delineation that has occurred between the physical divide of male and female gendered spaces are becoming smudged. Only time will tell whether the dichotomy has become, or is permitted to become, a mutually operative interface. It may well be that now the world of economy and knowledge have left the physical plane, women are at last being permitted entree to these ghost towns of male power. Men meanwhile, may well be colonising and claiming territory within virtual-reality and the next frontiers.

Chapter Four

Safety

Housing is essential to peoples well-being and sense of self because without shelter people face physiological and psychological harm (Leavitt, 1992)

In the late eighties media attention was focused on the chaos within Auckland's psychiatric services. It spoke of the danger to the community of people released from psychiatric institutions and focused on the stabbing and killings of two people in Jervois Rd (Metro June, 1988). The Mason report confirmed the media's findings and, in response, the Minister of Health sacked the entire Auckland Area Health Board. A commissioner was appointed. Gary Taylor, the newly appointed chairman of the board, announced he could not guarantee the safety of citizens from marauding former psychiatric patients (Metro June 1991). Although no doubt a ploy to attract more funding to the grossly under-funded community health purse, it emphasised the perception that concerns for safety were solely for the 'public'. It failed to see that within the newly established communities created by deinstitutionalisation, many people also needed protection from each other.

In a Metro article in June 1991 Carroll du Chateau made an incisive statement that was soon to turn around and stab her in the back. *People like Billy White* she said *operate within the law*. Less than two years later, Billy White's name was to become synonymous with the physical abuse of boarding house residents. In September 1994 he was convicted of sexual assault on a tenant. The prosecutor in the case alleged a 'continuous stream' of sexual assaults by White, often on victims too drunk or drugged to resist (Dominion 30.9.94). He was jailed for two and a half years. White had previously appeared in court on charges of assault after beating one of the residents with a rubber hose but had been discharged after telling the judge he was leaving the business. The hose was left on top of a wardrobe as a warning against future misbehaviour. (NZ Woman's Weekly 5.12.94). At the same time that White was up on the assault charge, another of his colleagues appeared in court for sexual abuse of the same tenant that White had been charged with assaulting. Tommy Kingi was jailed for seven years. (NZ Woman's Weekly 5.12.94).

The Billy White story illustrates a flutter of media interest that appeared in 1993 and 1994 in relation to abuse and questionable practices in boarding houses. Questions were raised about the number of boarding house operators who, in their approach, were not unlike Billy White and the media described an almost casual level of exploitation (Dominion 30.9.94). A Scientology sponsored Citizens Commission for Human Rights established itself in 1993 in an attempt to publicise what they perceived to be frequent complaints of assault and neglect in boarding houses (Sunday Star 30.5.93). They claimed that most of these abuses were going unnoticed (New Truth 25.6.93). Many articles spoke of incidents in which boarding house operators manipulated residents into handing over money (Western Leader 6.93; Sunday Star 30.5.93). Some articles offset their stories with a vignette of a well-run caring boarding house. It has therefore been interesting to note that three of the four places described in such a positive light were mentioned by interviewees during this research project as places of neglect and abuse. In the last two years the media appears to have lost interest in the boarding house situation. Perhaps the representation of the plight of these individuals has descended to the realm of hackneyed, cliched journalism. Meanwhile other homeless stories have risen to take their place. Amidst the crises of extended families living in caravan parks and large numbers of people affected by the state housing reforms, it is difficult to get media mileage out of the plight of single individuals.

The previous media attention is of particular interest in that all the articles cited dealt only with male victims. In fact it is difficult to find any accounts of abuse on women during this period. However, it should not be assumed that women in boarding houses were free from physical abuse during this time. It may merely suggest that the abuse of marginalised women is so entrenched or commonplace that it does not warrant media interest. It may also be speculated that the victimisation of men in New Zealand society is more likely to stimulate public outrage than the victimisation of women. The activities of community agencies at this time suggest that women's safety within boarding houses was, in fact, an increasing area of concern. A boarding house set up in Wellington in 1988 received media attention for being the first women's (and eventually only) boarding house set up under a Housing Corporation scheme. It claimed to be offering ..... *independence, safety and security* (NZ Woman's Weekly 31.8.1992). The article did not state safety from what. However, it did go on to state that Wellington City Council had established a need for women's short stay accommodation. Similarly in Christchurch, a women's shelter administered by the YWCA was established in 1986. It is the only female shelter in New Zealand and is designed to cater for women who do not fit into the criteria established by the women's

refuges. The shelter houses many women who have come from boarding houses. Records reveal that escaping violence was the second most common reason for women needing accommodation (relationship breakdown being the most common). The shelter receives approximately six women each night who stay on average four to six weeks. The shelter must leave its current premises at the end of this year and it is unsure whether it will be in a position to re-establish elsewhere.[8] In Auckland, the Pitt Street congregation of the Methodist Central Parish and Mission established a drop-in centre as a safe place for women and children. It quickly became used by a number of marginalised women who needed respite from the rigours of their living situations. A proportion of these women were homeless, and many others lived in boarding houses. The church-based organisations, government social workers, police and tenants organisations have all acknowledged their concern that women in boarding houses are frequently exposed to unsafe situations.

Sexual harassment by landlords is neither a new nor an isolated phenomenon. A decade ago overseas studies were recording the growing incidence of harassment and linking it to housing shortages (Fuentes & Miller, 1986). Within New Zealand a recent Ministry of Housing report (1994) documents the prevalence of sexual discrimination in the private rental sector. These findings echo the findings of this research paper that fear and powerlessness prevent many victims reporting sexual harassment. Sexual harassment in the home has been likened to that in the workplace but is considered to be more insidious - *if women have no refuge, no place where they feel safe, if the home doesn't help in terms of restoration there is incredible psychological and physical damage* (Fuentes & Miller, 1986). The Royal Commission on Social Policy found that housing difficulties forced women to *stay in violent relationships longer than is safe for them or their children* (Roberts, 1988).[9] Women who experience violence in their boarding houses have heightened anxiety, fear and a generalised feeling of dysfunction. They must constantly adjust their behaviour or seek safe places where they can remain inconspicuous and anonymous (Merves, 1992). In describing the lowest possible housing standards, Kearns has stated that *a home should, at the very least, enable its inhabitants to live in reasonable comfort, dignity and security. ... [standards should ensure] that a home is not actually detrimental to physical and psychological health* (Kearns & Smith, 1993). Sadly, for many women living in boarding houses, this is not the case.

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[8] Telephone conversation with Christchurch Women's Shelter social worker, July 1996.
[9] This statement begs the questions - a) how long is it safe to stay in a violent relationship? and b) is it only women with children who are victims of violence in their homes? This persistent conceptualisation of domestic violence as being limited to the nuclear family has obscured the needs of women who are violated within alternative household formations.

In a recent study done in the United Kingdom by Tomas and Dittmar (1995) homeless women found it difficult to describe the difference between a house (as a place of safety and security) and a home (as psychologically meaningful). For homeless women a house was a place of dependency that one shared with others. A home was a place of ones own where one was safe. Tomar and Dittmar found that in the absence of safety and security the house/home distinction is not easily rendered - *The assumption in the literature that home is a meaningful experience which occurs over and above the safety and security of four walls and a roof is therefore not supported. Home for twelve homeless women is shown to be no more than the meaning of housing - a place of safety and security.* Watson and Austerberry (1986) investigated people's feelings of being 'at home' and found that individuals can be inadequately housed but still feel at home. The reverse was also found to be true - women may live in adequate housing but can still be alienated from a sense of being at home by violence or fear. Kearns (1994) talked about this as metaphorical homelessness - *having a dwelling and being homeless are not mutually exclusive categories.* Many women and minority groups never feel at home in the culture and public world in which they are forced to interact.

New Zealand's gendered society is underpinned by institutions that condone and encourage male violence (James and Saville-Smith, 1989). Nowhere is this more evident than on the rugby field. Currently there is debate in the media over whether blows meted out on the rugby field should be dealt with by the criminal courts. *There might be 101 reasons you might throw a punch on the rugby field....I don't know whether they should end up in court.* claimed a North Harbour rugby coach and former policeman. Colin Meads, a leading all-black in the 1970's (and therefore a national hero) responded categorically - *Rugby should punish its own* (NZ Herald 27.4.96).

It might seem, therefore, that males have privatised violence in the areas that suit them. Of particular note is a legislative system that has privatised the violation of women by men within marriage and relationships. There has been (prior to the July 1996 amendment of the Domestic Violence Act) a very clear difference vis-a-vis the treatment of violence in the family courts compared with the treatment of assault in the criminal courts. It is called domestic violence (never wife-battery) in the family court, and assault in the criminal courts, thus maintaining the myth that there is a difference between hitting your own wife and hitting your neighbour's wife. The lack of punitive measures available to the Family Court judges gave a very clear message that wife battery is not as severe as assault on a stranger, and hence we must draw the

conclusion that there exists an inequality between the status of the victims. The hearing of battery cases in the Family Court (that are designed to be conciliatory rather than punitive), made no statement that the conduct was wrong and it was unable to make moral judgements or sanctions. The concept of reconciliation as a way of ending wife-battery is ludicrous given the power imbalance already existing in the relationship. The single greatest impediment to reducing male violence within families has been the very treatment of it as a family problem rather than a male problem. Men have not being encouraged to feel responsible for their behaviour, nor has the onus been put on them to change.

The conceptualisation of 'family violence' as both private and non-criminal creates and reinforce a mythology that violating people in our homes is not as serious as violating those who live elsewhere. Such a mythology is carried over into boarding houses and group living situations and supported and maintained by authorities and helping professionals. It might be speculated that if a male boarding house resident was to violate a woman on the street it would be treated with extreme seriousness. However, women who live in boarding houses are not accorded the same care and attention despite their lack of relationship with the offender. It seems they are not considered to be members of the public. Although 'social' problems such as violence, alcohol consumption and car accidents are frequently analysed and discussed within popular media, the construct of masculinity and its role in a gendered society is seldom examined within these analyses.

Widespread drug and alcohol dependency within boarding house communities increases the volatility of the domestic environment. Biological differences in strength make women particularly vulnerable to attack in such situations. In a Metro article two Health Board members spoke of the number of men living in boarding houses who have the potential 'to go off' and who are notoriously difficult to manage. Without their drugs they are restless and belligerent (Metro June 1991). Although they are initially released into supervised care there is no law to ensure they stay in one place.

Within the disciplines of geography, planning and women's studies it is claimed that women's use of public and social spaces is limited through a fear of violence - 'the geography of fear'. Numerous studies have shown that women are generally more fearful of crime than men (Bell Planning Associates, 1996; Gordon, Riger et al., 1980). This fear serves to exacerbate the inequalities between men's and women's use of public spaces. This often results in precautionary behaviour which impacts in the form of lost opportunities. Women's fear of utilising specific places impacts negatively

in that these public spaces become even more deserted and hence even more intimidating (Andrew et al 1994). Feminist analyses claim that such restrictions operate as a means of social control - *the fear of rape keeps women off the streets at night. Keeps women at home. Keeps women passive and modest for fear that they be thought provocative* (quoting Susan Griffin in Gordon, Riger et al, 1980). Some women may adopt bizarre or repellent behaviour to protect themselves or may purposely wear unattractive clothing in order to prevent being approached (Stoner, 1983; Merves, 1992).

A recent study claims that the rates of victimisation reported in crime data are highest for those in shared accommodation such as boarding houses (Bell Planning Associates, 1996). It also claims that rates of crime are likely to be higher when there is no sense of community. Within the institutional arrangement of the boarding house, dependency and alienation can be reinforced. Personal territory and space can be easily invaded wherein fighting, verbal abuse or just repressed anger are inevitable outcomes. Sprague claims that it is important to recognise that interpersonal conflicts and withdrawal are not necessarily caused by psychological problems but may be a result of badly designed or badly used space - *to avoid blaming the victims, it is necessary to distinguish between the problems of people and places* (Sprague, 1991). Boarding houses have traditionally be seen as a people problem, not a physical problem (Rempel and Swanton, 1994). Kearn's study claimed that within the boarding house residents have more space than the traditionally housed in that they have access to a variety of rooms other than their own (Kearns, 1994). But his study did not examine the ability of individuals to access this 'extra' space. If women cannot access the common rooms within the house then they have significantly less room. Thus they are rendered confined and trapped.

Systemic lack of protection

The physical and mental plight of women who stay in boarding houses has been facilitated by a systemic lack of protection that manifests itself in three distinct areas:

1.   Lack of Protection from Authorities

Most of the residents in Billy White's boarding house were placed there by government social welfare agencies. The parents of the man abused by White and Kingi had approached both Social Welfare and the Community Funding Agency for support but were given no assistance. They claimed there was nowhere else for him to go (NZ

Woman's Weekly 5.12.94). The man sexually assaulted by White testified he had repeatedly told health workers about the attacks. He too had been told there was nowhere else to go (Dominion 30.9.94). The same article quotes a social worker - *it's a very, very difficult situation - the social worker shouldn't be doing it* [ie ignoring the complaint] *but what else can he do.* Taylor Centre Senior Social Worker, Sally Monk, had been quoted as saying that she would never do this to a patient and that she has always referred abuse complaints for legal action (Dominion 30.9.94). This obscures the fact that there is no where else to go while lengthy investigations take place, that there is no formal apparatus in place to conduct investigations and that any informal investigations are often stymied by a lack of proof and conflicting information. Whilst there exists a general consensus amongst health and welfare professionals that the abuse of women in boarding houses is widespread, they all agree that a lack of resources and alternatives renders any intervention impotent.

2.   Lack of protection in statute and legal system

The lack of protection for women in boarding houses is overtly reinforced through the exclusion of this type of accommodation from key pieces of legislation. Most significantly S5(k) of the Residential Tenancies Act (1986) explicitly excludes boarding houses from the provisions of the Act:

> **S5 Act excluded in certain cases** - *This Act shall not apply in the following cases.......(k) Where the premises constitute part of any hotel, motel, boarding house, or lodging house used for the provision of temporary or transient accommodation:*

Although the Act was recently amended, submissions from church groups and tenant advocacy groups failed to get boarding houses included within the Act. Despite there being a direct link between factors such as evictions and lockouts and the consequence of homelessness (Stoner, 1983), people who live in boarding houses are not protected from rent rises, eviction or sexual harassment as are other tenants within New Zealand. Such vulnerability continues to ensure that women will not report incidents of abuse for fear of losing their homes.

Women who have been violated in boarding houses have previously been excluded from the protection of the Domestic Protection Act (1982). Although a woman living in a boarding house may have been escaping violence from a male with whom she was residing, the Act did not consider her plight to be domestic. However, the new

Domestic Violence Act (1995) which came into effect on 1 July 1996, has widened the coverage to include all people living in a 'domestic relationship'. At S4(1)(c) the meaning of 'domestic relationship' includes persons who *ordinarily share a household with the other person.* Theoretically, this now means that any person living in a boarding house can take out a protection order against another resident. The Auckland Domestic Violence Centre reports that, to the best of their knowledge, as at 1 November 1996 there had been no applications to the courts for a protection order from a woman living in a boarding house. However, they have recommended the process to at least one woman who has complained of abuse in her boarding house. They claim that it would be difficult to obtain accurate records of applications for protection orders by women in boarding houses because the applicant is not required to state the type of dwelling in which she lives. National Radio reported on 15 October 1996 that there had been a 70% increase in application to the courts for protection orders in the first three months since the Acts inception.

The level of under reportage by victims of assault in boarding houses is considered to be overwhelming.[10] Victim silence is maintained by the fact that the few cases that are reported seldom proceed past the initial phase of police inquiry. There is a perception that the victims often do not make reliable or credible witnesses and this makes charges and allegations difficult to substantiate. For example, assault charges against a Tokoroa boarding house worker were withdrawn because the victim had alcohol dementia and was therefore deemed to be an unreliable witness (Sunday Star 30.5.93).

3.   Lack of protection from women's refuges

Women's refuges are unwilling to assist women escaping abuse in boarding houses. They perceive their primary role to be catering for women escaping violent partner relationships, predominantly those with children. They are already facing more demands than they can meet. The domestic relationships within the boarding house are not seen to meet the refuge criteria. Part of the reluctance stems from the fact that women from boarding houses are perceived as displaying erratic behaviour and taking up large quantities of limited resources. They are seen as a destabilising factor within the refuge, frequently requiring a level of supervision that strains the staffing resources, most of whom are volunteers. A 1983 report indicated that amongst those turned away from refuges were women .... *who are seriously mentally unbalanced*

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[10] See Part III - interviews with Domestic Violence Centre; Community Constable; Homeless Team and City Missions.

or antisocial. [11] Thirteen years later, the policy is still the same. [12] The Australian National Housing Strategy (1995) maintained that women with psychiatric problems made up a large proportion of those seeking shelter in women's refuges. However, the authors do not associate women who are being victimised in boarding houses with domestic violence. It appears the focus is on the psychiatric condition of the women not the violence being meted out to them. Although they recommend supported accommodation for this group of women, they do not suggest that the perpetrator of the violence be removed from the boarding house as they do for the violator in the 'family' home.

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[11] National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (1983) A Socio-Economic Assessment of New Zealand Women's Refuges Pub: Synergy p44
[12] Conversation with Catherine Plunkett, Domestic Violence Centre, Auckland - 7 May 1996

Chapter Five

Invisibility

Homeless women carry around a huge load that consists of everybody's fantasies about them. Solitary women have always carried this load. (Golden, 1992).

Everyday we confront images of the city. Glossy billboards present vistas of corporate buildings with plate glass windows - home to men in suits who orchestrate the world of commerce, of city hall and of civic transactions. Sometimes the image presents a construction site - the city in progress. Men in hard hats straddle metal girders laying claim to vacant spaces with shouts and jack hammers. At night youths in fast cars mark their territory with a squirt of burning rubber. This is a masculine conception of the city. But the city as it features in women's lives is seldom represented. Where are the office receptionists who line the bus shelters, morning and night, waiting to catch the yellow buses? Do we see the part-time shop workers, laden with groceries, struggling to get home before the kids get out of school? Do we notice the woman in her shapeless smock, running in her lunch break to pay the power bill? These are the invisible feminine images of the city. Even more invisible are the women who live in boarding houses who spend a large portion of each day weaving their way through the tapestry of the city. They are right there under our noses, whiling away the hours awaiting the highlight of the day - return to the boarding house for the 4.30 pm evening meal. These too are feminine images of the city that are seldom seen or portrayed. It is becoming apparent that the visibility of homeless women is impaired by a system of social and cultural mechanisms that obscures the nature of their existence.

Invisible in research and data

Existing research on homelessness has focused mainly on men. This has served to render homeless women either invisible or non-existent. Some have claimed that this is because men predominate numerically in homeless populations (Crystal, 1984). Others have claimed that women are homeless but that they are simply not in those places where the homeless are counted (Stoner, 1983; Merves, 1992). This does not necessarily suggest that women are not in need of shelter. Women's refuges are not usually included in homeless studies, and many shelters (where the homeless are

traditionally counted) do not cater for women (Stoner, 1983). Women resort less frequently than men to shelters (Crystal, 1984). Some of the women interviewed in the study attached to this thesis claimed that they felt unsafe in the night shelters and that they would rather sleep on the streets. The head of the organisation which runs the Auckland night shelter also claimed the shelter was a place where violent altercations were a frequent occurrence.[13] This tended to intimidate female residents. Women prefer to be in small and informal settings, no matter the condition, rather than in the more institutional mission shelters (Stoner, 1983). The severe plight of many homeless women is further concealed by the fact that research projects do not tend to pick up the worse cases (Diblin, 1991).

Counts of homeless populations traditionally exclude any woman who is not registered or associated with a community agency (Duvall, 1988). One of the first systematic studies of homelessness in New Zealand consisted of a survey of people approaching community agencies or the Housing Corporation for housing. The sex of those seeking assistance was not recorded. The study was further confused by the fact that any person or household that did not fit into the traditional nuclear family model was put in the 'other' category (Kilgour, 1989). Hence, single women's housing need was submerged amongst a plethora of other demographic variables. If housing policy does not cater for single homeless women it is unlikely that state housing providers will be approached for assistance by this group. Public rental housing is rarely available to single women. When it is, they are usually at the bottom of waiting lists while women with children receive priority. This creates a situation whereby single women do not register with Housing New Zealand and therefore their need is not recognised in agency statistics. This compounds the myth that single women do not experience housing need relative to other recognised groups. In an Auckland study single women were more likely to approach community agencies than the Housing Corporation for assistance, thus reflecting the assumption that their needs would not be met at the latter place (Kilgour, 1989). Watson(1986) suggests that a general disinclination to label themselves homeless also prevents many women from making legitimate claims for housing assistance (Watson 1986)

Hidden in stereotypes

Out of the women and homelessness debate is emerging evidence that women's invisibility is maintained through the social construction of myths and stereotypes

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[13] Conversation with Charlie Fenwick, Auckland Methodist Mission - 8 May 1996

surrounding their predicament (Stoner, 1983; Merves, 1992; Golden, 1992). Popular stereotypes of the bag-lady or the prostitute, they claim, have contributed to the misunderstanding of the plight of homeless women. The myth of the bag-lady carrying millions of dollars in her purse was tragically realised in Auckland in 1995 with the brutal murder of 'Betty' whose body was found in the Auckland Domain. Betty was rumoured to be carrying thousands of dollars in her handbag. It is intriguing to note that woman like Betty get known only by their first names, even though their identities are profiled both locally and nationally. No other murder victims are labelled in such an informal manner. It suggests the detachment of Betty from any form of identity. Betty's decision in life to live independently has been punished by a society that publicly severs her from any relationship to father or husband. Omission of the surname has the effect of rendering her identity both feminine and infantile.[14]

Because homeless women live in such extreme situations, people tend to perceive them more as symbols than as fellow human beings. People are interested when the woman has a mystical or horror story attached to her (eg Betty) but do not want to know the economic or social facts associated with her predicament. Isolated women, living on the edge of society, have frequently been both feared and despised. Fairytales and myths are full of stories of women alone who changed, transformed, controlled and manipulated others. Witches are seen as the enemy of society - *witch as the spinster is a continuation of the discourse wherein the woman outside the controls of a relationship with a man is deemed a threat* (Ussher, 1991). The image of the witch can be clearly associated with the bag lady - long warty noses, pointy hats and smelly brew bubbling away in the cauldron are mirrored by current day images of the ragged, unkempt, smelly bag lady who carries her cauldron in the form of bags with magical belongings inside. Thus her physical and economic plight remains hidden within a monodimensional image - an archaic symbol to be both feared and ignored.

It seems that the 'shopping bag ladies' are the only homeless women society can perceive. Out of this has grown the myth of the rich eccentric carrying around huge wads of money. For Betty, as for other homeless or transient women in Britain and USA, such mythical construction may cost them their lives. There seems to a general reluctance in society to see the bag lady's preoccupation with her possessions as healthy and normal behaviour - it is always relegated to the level of eccentricity. Most of us have homes which we adorn, furnish and garnish with our personalities. Many of

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[14] Betty's attacker/s have never been apprehended. Whether or not sufficient police resources were provided for solving this murder is open to speculation. After their initial excitement over the circumstances of Betty's death, the media have remained unusually quiet over any subsequent investigation.

us collect and hoard memorabilia. It can provide a sense of history and continuity and provide for a formation and record of personal identity. For women who have no home in which to feature their personalities, the bag must become the sole focus of identity. To lose their meagre possessions is to lose the links with the self. Hence, the treasuring of the bag can be translated into a healthy commitment to selfhood. Although Golden supports this view she presents it in a less positive light - *Most of the homeless women I knew were simply traumatised into a rigid defence of a tiny and desperately vulnerable core of self - which is still their treasure* (Golden, 1992).

Throughout the ages confusion has developed within the representations of woman alone. History alternates between images of the old, wise woman and the scheming witch. Young women's active sexuality has been offset against old women's occult and implicit sexual powers. Similarly, confusion exists today between representations of the homeless woman as sexually inebriated and in need of control and that of the homeless waif needing protection from the machinations of male sexual intent. Such dichotomies in the representation of women have always existed. On the one hand there is the Christian representation of Mary who is portrayed as the mother of God while simultaneously retaining her virginity. Her purity and goodness is based on her selflessness and the repression of her sexuality. Compare this with Isis, the pagan goddess of fertility. Her spirituality and sexuality were fused into one powerful entity. Positioned in between these two images of femininity is Eve, the pure (but weak willed) woman who falls and takes man with her. Since the fall of Adam women have been blamed for provoking uncontrollable sexual desire in men. [15] Unpartnered women in boarding houses are particularly vulnerable to stereotypes that reduce their identities to their perceived sexual role - they are either witches, whores or waifs. Hence they remain hidden in the image of improper womanhood. Their economic and physical plight is frequently perceived as a result of their refusal to occupy their gendered role.

Gender roles also maintain homeless women's invisibility in another key way. Unlike homeless men, women cannot sit together on park benches or sit alone in a public bar without attracting attention. Neither can they sleep alone in bus shelters or on park benches. Such behaviour from women is considered too deviant and out of place. Life on the street for women is far harder than for men. They are easily physically victimised, they are more likely to be raped than their male counterparts and they are susceptible to pregnancy. Women are forced to seek out hiding places where they do

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[15] It is only in the past decade that a woman's sexual history has been inadmissible as evidence by the defence in rape and sexual assault cases (although it is frequently alluded to). However, the way a woman dresses, her level of intoxication, and past sexual activity with the defendant are frequently construed as measures of 'consent' in many rape cases.

not stand out, where they are less noticeable. They have internalised the gender ethic and become invisible. In their constraint they are isolated from company and social contact.

Marginalisation

Marginalisation is a process through which people are rendered invisible. First there is a denial that they exist and once their existence is proven there is a refusal to accept they are real people like the rest of us. Marginalised persons are frequently those who violate social norms. The woman alone has violated her prescribed role of wife and motherhood. Golden argues that the identity of a woman is solely dependent on her being part of a family, without which she is indefinable and has no recognised status. *The mere nature of women released from patriarchal constraints is a force so strong that it threatens every established power. It therefore becomes defined as evil and must lead a shadowy, semi-criminal existence* (Golden, 1992). The presence in medieval society of women said to be witches grew out of social and economic imperatives. Women whose husbands had died could no longer meet the obligations owed to the lords and were forced out to the edges of the village. The woman alone is still not tolerated today. She is forced into marginal positions in society as spinster, widow, lesbian, whore etc. She is treated with contempt and derision, is prevented from accessing the society's resources (eg housing, finance) and she is excluded from full participation in society. As with other marginalised persons she is tainted with images of criminality, promiscuity and madness. Despite the overwhelming growth in numbers of single female households in New Zealand, the mandate of the nuclear family remains firmly imbedded in this country's psyche.

Madness and Invisibility

In a well documented study in 1970 male and female psychiatrists were asked to conceptualise a healthy male, a healthy adult and a healthy female. Very few cited differences between a healthy adult and a healthy male. However a healthy female was perceived as .... *less aggressive, less independent, more emotional, more easily influenced, more submissive, more passive, less logical, knowing less "the way of the world", less able to make decisions, less self confident, and more dependant than the healthy male or adult* (Golden, 1992). The obvious deduction is that in order to be considered normal and healthy by psychiatrists a women must present unhealthy symptoms. This presents her with a double bind - women who exhibit positive characteristics of a healthy adult are deemed to be unfeminine ie not proper women.

Unfortunately, time does not appear to have dinted these professional opinions. A 1988 report cites a string of studies that indicate females, relative to males, tend to be seen by professionals as intrinsically more maladjusted (Golden, 1992).

Over the centuries madness has been both morally and philosophically meaningful and has often been portrayed as a portent or oracle of truth (even if not reasoned). Within the Elizabethan court, Shakespeare's fool was the vehicle through which social commentary and criticism could be made without fear of punishment. However, the age of reason and enlightenment brought with it the exile of unreason from thought and the........ *denial that the non-rational existed - [it] dismissed the experience of madness as meaningless* (Golden, 1992). Foucault (1966) described this process as the *disconnection of conscious experience from the 'Beyond'*. Behaviour perceived as irrational was construed as a failure to follow the dictates of social order and, like criminality, it became an offence against society and was punished and controlled through imprisonment. Foucault claimed that society constructs the normal by analysing the abnormal. Yet it never permits those who are described as abnormal to comment on the normal. By labelling them mad we silence them. In silencing them we make them invisible. In deconstructing mental illness madness is more than a set of symptoms .... *but are signs of social relations disguised as natural things, concealing their roots in human reciprocity* (Ussher, 1991).

Within the feminist literature women's mental illness or disability is frequently referred to as madness (Golden, 1992; Ussher, 1991; Chesler, 1972) because it denotes a recognised experience without necessarily associating it with disease (Golden, 1992). Madness, it is claimed, can not be viewed outside of other discourses - misogyny, power, sexuality or badness. In her work, Ussher seeks to establish women's madness as an operative of misogyny - *Madness both signifies what it means to be a woman and serves as a description of the distress of many women. Any analysis of madness needs to acknowledge the reality of the pain of the individual woman, the needs of women as a group, and the construction of 'woman' as a signifier, where madness plays a central role* (Ussher, 1991). Ussher argues that the role of archetypal housewife and mother, isolated and economically dependent (*repository of mythology and maintained by misogyny*), has for too long been the site of women's madness. She claims that to be a woman is often to be mad. The demands and constraints of conforming to their prescribed role creates pressures that are difficult to contain. Similarly, to abandon these roles is considered deviant and deviancy has always been equated with mental illness. The sort of women who are sent to asylums are those that do not present the countenance of happy wife and mother - women who are angry,

woman who are lesbian, women who are depressed and women who abandon their children.

Within this construct of women's madness there has also emerged polarisations between the conceptualisation and treatment of women who are wealthy and that of women who are poor. This dichotomy was most apparent in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century where poor women were sent to the asylum while rich women were consigned to 'the attic'. Signs of this are still evident today - while poor women are diagnosed as psychotic and treated within a public health system, wealthy women's mental illness is diagnosed as neurotic and treated privately.

In an age that disapproved of sensuality and learning in women, hysteria was seen as the fate of women who were too fond of sex or knowledge (Golden, 1992).
Women are invariably called neurotic or hysterical or emotional when they speak out or criticise the system. Feminism is frequently portrayed as the ranting of mad women. This serves to not only denigrate the logic of the argument but acts as a repellent to 'normal' ('I'm not a feminist but...') women who may wish to participate in the debate. By labelling dissidents as mad it silences their voices and renders the argument impotent.

Community Agencies

Many of the community groups working at the coalface of poverty and homelessness are seriously under-funded and under-resourced. They struggle each day against an ever-increasing tide of human desperation. Frequently staffed by volunteers or employees working for a minimal wage, they are dependent on the goodwill of public donors and their own ingenuity in providing aid and succour. Within this environment it is difficult to maintain adequate records or to implement investigative research projects. Hence vital data and information from people who are most in a position to inform is lost to the ongoing day to day demands of running the drop-in centres. The Night Shelter for Women found that arrival records were seldom updated even when personal particulars were later evident or forthcoming (Kilgour, 1989). Hence the reality of many women's existence is concealed. Oftentimes, homeless centres are approached by students to conduct studies, such as is the case with this thesis. However, people from the outside have not developed the rapport and trust necessary for the accurate portrayal of the situation. They tend to pick up for interviews those persons who have managed to implement some level of control over their housing situation. The brevity of the research period combines with the relative ignorance of

the outside researcher to conceal vital factors. It is the people with the most dire need who are not reflected in research conducted from outside the agency.

Invisibility is also maintained by the nature of the codes and ethics of many of the community agencies. Although many shelters and drop in centres attempt to record demographics of those requesting assistance they do not like to be seen to be interrogative or invasive in any way. Maintaining the privacy of the homeless is considered tantamount to being able to achieve the trust necessary to be able to intervene. The co-ordinator of the St James Centre in Auckland would not assist with this current project on account of maintaining the privacy of individuals. It can become difficult to affect change at the institutional or policy level when plight of individuals at the personal level is unable to be revealed.

A lack of an appropriate advocacy structure can combine with a lack of formal networks between community organisations to ensure that people evicted from boarding houses literally get lost. This was the case early this year when a group of people were evicted from a Pt Chevalier boarding house. They initially approached Income Support Services seeking assistance. Income Support rang the Tenants Protection Association who, in turn, rang the Community Constable. All claimed they were unable or unequipped to deal with the problem. Yet all of them thought the other was probably dealing with it. None of them had obtained a contact name from the group of evicted persons. During the writing of this thesis I was approached on a number of occasions by community organisations seeking advice on what to do for people evicted from boarding houses.

As well as a lack of advocacy there are no clear networks or systems in place through which to identify incidents of concern. Generally, news of a person's dilemma is passed on the street grapevine or overheard at a drop in centre. This may be some days later when belated intervention becomes impractical. Or once again it depends on the resources of an overstretched community group to provide an advocacy they may well not be skilled or sufficiently resourced to deliver. A few weeks after the incident mentioned above another group of women were evicted from a central city boarding house. There was no one to formally advocate for these people as they were not protected by law. No one quite knew how to help these woman. The implications of this eviction was made tragically manifest two weeks later when one of the women died. One can only speculate on the relationship between the stress of moving house and the subsequent death.

This incident led to some interesting dialogue and exchanges amongst the group of people who form the monitoring group for this thesis. In an earlier draft I had expressed concern about what I perceived to be the silence surrounding the death. In particular I claimed that what community agencies describe as 'maintaining personal privacy' might in fact constitute inadvertent gatekeeping. However, further analysis of the situation reveals this as a dilemma that strikes at the heart of every person working with disadvantaged and marginalised communities. The urge to rush in and make everything better is totally disempowering for the person being 'helped' and does no more than ease the guilt or frustrations of the 'helper'. Believing that one knows best for another is an act of disempowerment. When people have little material wealth, their personal autonomy is paramount. The frustration for many community groups is that they must remain silent about many incidents that could ultimately receive publicity. While this may function to maintain the invisibility of the reality of many homeless women's lives in the immediate term, this must be balanced against the long-term gains of individual autonomy and community empowerment.

Part Two

Chapter Six

Housing

The targeting of meagre benefits, the normalisation of mass unemployment and urban policies which seem to assume that the best means of combating poverty is to distribute the poor more evenly hardly begin to address the reasons why people are poor in the first place (Peel, 1995)

The Housing Reforms

New Zealand has a long history of state intervention in housing provision dating back to the 1930's. For nearly five decades the state created universal housing assistance through the supply of rental accommodation and access to mortgage finance (Thorns, 1988; Ferguson, 1994). However, the late eighties saw a radical shift in New Zealand away from the welfare state and a wholesale move to the application of market mechanisms. This included a withdrawal of direct supply of housing and minimal intervention into the housing market (Kelsey, 1995). The direct provision of housing was replaced by an income maintenance programme wherein accommodation benefits were directed to those on limited incomes. The activities of the state's housing provider, the Housing Corporation, were adjusted so as to include a commercial objective. Not only did it sell off large quantities of the state's housing stocks (thereby indicating its abdication from the role of housing provider), but it also raised the rents on the remainder of its stocks to a level consistent with the private rental market.[16] Tenants who had previously paid 25% of their income on rents were now required to pay the going market rate for rental accommodation in their region. All New Zealanders whose income was below a specified amount were entitled to receive an 'accommodation supplement'. The supplement was 65% of the difference between their rent and the stipulated market rental for their region.

Proponents of the market approach claim that it is a more efficient and equitable system of housing support than that offered by the previous welfare state. They claim that it ties housing assistance more directly to housing need, is less expensive for the

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[16] On 18 July 1196 the New Zealand Herald reported that in *the company sold $216 million of houses and spent just $53 million on new housing stock in the last two years.* 515 houses were sold in Auckland. 2180 houses were sold in NZ in the past year. Only about 30% of these were sold to existing tenants.

state to maintain and it offers individual choice to consumers (Johnson, 1993). The current Minister for Housing, Murray McCully, claims the previous system was socially unjust and that the object of the housing reforms is to provide greater equity in the distribution of the available housing assistance.[17] However, certain factors can inevitably restrain or limit the efficiency of the market - particularly discrimination and imbalances in market power. Prospective tenants may be selected on the basis of their ability to pay, there is limited security of tenure and delays in the market meeting demand can create vacuums and exacerbate need.

The market approach to housing has also been widely criticised for addressing demand issues without adequately taking into account issues of supply (Roberts, 1988; Thorns, 1988; Watson, 1988; Kelsey, 1995; Hyman, 1994). This has resulted in problems of access and affordability in which *the cumulative effects of these costs and access problems is to increase housing pressure upon the lower cost accommodation available, driving up the rent levels and increasing levels of overcrowding* (Thorns, 1988). Charles Waldegrave has criticised the cuts that were made to Income Support benefits at the same time as state houses were moved into the market sector and argued that *there can be no adequate housing policy unless the benefit levels are addressed at the same time, so that whole area of having access to money to be able to get adequate food as well as adequate housing is recognised.*[18] Roberts (1988) claims that inadequate housing leads to multi-disadvantage and adds further to the costs of the state - *The market approach does not address adequately the needs of the low-income, marginalised and discriminated groups. In the American and British markets, decreasing the government's role has not led to better housing. There have been increasing shortages and declining standards* (Roberts, 1988). He insists that the two fundamental and essential components of housing policy are the provision of sufficient number of dwellings to meet demand and to assist those on low incomes to access decent and affordable accommodation. In response to recommendations that people on low incomes should not have to pay more than 25% of the income on housing the Minister for Housing, Murray McCully, has responded by stating that .....*such a concept would be prohibitively expensive to fund.*[19] From this comment it might be assumed that either the number of people in New Zealand living on low incomes is extremely high or that the cost of housing in New Zealand is too high. Either way, after nearly a decade of reforms, the New Zealand market does not seem to be adequately addressing income or housing need.

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[17] Letter from the Minister of Housing to NZ Council of Social Services - 17 August 1995
[18] Charles Waldegrave, Family Centre, Anglican Social Services - speaking at a hui convened by the Human Rights Commission and Race Relations Office at Orakei Marae on 10 February 1993.
[19] Letter to Barbara Turner, NZ Council of Social Services, 17 August 1995.

Serious Housing Need

Many areas of New Zealand are experiencing a state of serious housing shortage with increasing levels of need and disadvantage being recorded and reported (Waldegrave & Sawrey, 1994; Stephens, 1995; Kelsey, 1995). However, this is not a new phenomenon. A number of key organisations and commissions have been documenting and identifying future needs for the past twenty-five years[20] - all identify low income, single income and beneficiary households as potential areas of serious housing need. More recently critics have identified a lack of horizontal equity wherein various groups of people with serious housing need are missing out to those perceived to be in greater need. Single people lose out to families, single women lose out to single men etc. Kelsey (1995) quotes a March 1994 Ministry of Housing report that calculated *that between 20,000 and 30,000 households were in serious housing need, the overwhelming majority of which were single people.* In 1993 it was estimated that 48,000 households were in serious housing need (Waldegrave and Sawrey, 1994).

In 1988 the National Housing Commission reported a growing 'serious housing need' in New Zealand. Auckland was identified as having some of the most serious of this need with central Auckland being identified as having major concentrations of homeless persons (Percy & Johnson, 1988). Demand for housing at a national level continues to increase, with the Auckland region experiencing the most serious housing shortage (Kearns 1991). Most of the national demand is due to the increase in household formation rate.[21] The problems in Auckland have been created by the fact that increases in population and subsequent demand have occurred at the same time as supplies of affordable housing are declining. This has resulted in a sharp increase in housing prices and rental costs. This has impacted in the form of overcrowding in dwellings that are *unhealthy, dangerous and extremely stressful environments* (Kearns et al, 1992). Housing New Zealand rental waiting lists show a sharp increase in the number of applicants considered to have serious housing need.

In New Zealand there is no statutory obligation to house the homeless. Under the last Labour Government consideration was given to putting in place a register of homeless persons with a legal obligation for the Housing Corporation to find accommodation for those registered - similar to the register of unemployed. Although the proposal met

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[20] The Commission of Inquiry into Housing (1971); National Housing Commission (1978); National Housing Commission (1988); Royal Commission on Social Policy (1988).

[21] The increase in household formation rate is largely due to increases in marriage breakdown and increasing numbers of women choosing not to enter marriage (Kilgour, 1989).

with criticism from some academics for being labour intensive and not providing funds for construction, it was welcomed by social and community agencies as being an effective manner in which to illustrate the extent of the problem.[22] This policy was not implemented by the incoming National government. Neither has the present National government endeavoured to adopt a long-term strategic policy that is integrated with other areas of the country's economic and social policies.

Women and Housing Need

They are kept out of home ownership by low incomes; they are forced into reliance on subsidised housing in the public sector by inadequate incomes. They are discriminated against as mothers, single parents, social assistance recipients, abused women, and elderly women in both the private and public housing sectors (Wekerle and Novac, 1991)

The provision of state housing in New Zealand has been structured around and reinforced by the support and affirmation of the patriarchal nuclear family (Watson, 1989; Ferguson, 1994). State housing and support schemes have traditionally focused on the family unit and hence women's access to housing has often been based on their attachment to a male partner or dependant children (Watson and Austerberry, 1986). The absence of single person's housing needs in housing policy is a result of *institutional bias based on a patriarchal social system* (Duvall, 1988). The state originally provided access to housing for working men and their families while single people were excluded from all home assistance schemes. Forty years ago the General Manager of the State Advances Corporation claimed that the provision of accommodation for single working women could not be countenanced while there was a shortage of houses for families and that *the provision of subsidised housing for women without domestic responsibilities could be considered to be outside the proper sphere of the state* (Ferguson, 1994). Accordingly the majority of New Zealand's state housing stock has been designed to cater for the presumed needs of the nuclear family. Such rigidity in design values impacts adversely on the current market in that there is little choice for those who seek alternatives to the three-bedroom suburban home. In the United Kingdom, Little (1994) links the historical failure of governments and industry to provide for one person households with current issues of single women's homelessness. In New Zealand, the centrality of the nuclear family to housing policy has resulted in the marginalisation of single women's housing needs (Watson, 1988; Kilgour, 1989).

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[22] Article quoting Dr Judith Reinken and Dr David Thorns in NZ Herald 10 October 1987

New Zealand's housing market today is still largely oriented towards the traditional nuclear family despite the significant increase in women-headed households over the past two decades. It is women, more often than men, who are single parents, and women, more often than men, live alone.[23] Although a significant proportion of the state's housing stock is directed at unpartnered women with dependent children, it might be speculated that the state is in fact providing housing for children - women merely get provided for because they are the guardians.[24] Similarly, advocates for women's housing issues are apt to identify women's predominant needs in relation to the nuclear family and heterosexual partnership. Inquiries such as that conducted by the Royal Commission on Social Policy still tend to focus on women's need for protection from violence. This is despite the fact that women without domestic violence problems have been identified by women's organisations as a group in need of both emergency and long-term accommodation (Kilgour, 1989; Plunkett, 1996[25]). An average of fourteen women per month seek shelter at the Auckland City Mission emergency shelter that predominantly caters to men.[26] The centrality of domestic abuse to the women's housing debate functions to obscure systemic and structural inequities.

Women have housing needs which are independent of men's but so often they are dependent on men for their housing - *It is this dependence that makes women so vulnerable when relationships end* (Kilgour, 1989). Studies in both North America and New Zealand show that relationship breakdown is the most common reason for housing need among women, followed closely by violence (Duvall, 1988; Kilgour, 1989). However, the catalyst of housing need should not be confused with the causes of homelessness - homelessness is caused and maintained by lack of affordable housing and issues of poverty (Duvall, 1988).

Watson (1989) and Kelsey (1995) have claimed that the sexual division of labour is pivotal to women's independent access to housing as it maintains their inferior economic position and reinforces their domestic role and dependency upon men - *It is through these processes that dominant patriarchal relations are both created and reproduced* (Watson, 1989). Kilgour echoed these claims by asserting that household

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[23] Statistics New Zealand (1993) All About Women in New Zealand
[24] Spain, D.(1995) suggests that public housing is used to 'warehouse' women who live outside the married-couple ideal, thus containing spatially the problems associated with the growth of female householders: *poverty, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and a general threat to the patriarchal social order.*
[25] Conversation with Katherine Plunkett, Domestic Violence Unit, Auckland, 1996.
[26] Statistics gathered by the Auckland City Mission from January to September 1995.

structure, the labour market and the housing market cannot be considered in isolation from each other - *Housing need reinforces unemployment and vice versa* (Kilgour, 1989). Many female headed households have incomes below the poverty level[27] and because of this, are more likely to be living in rental or public housing - *Women's lower earning potential affects reproductive choices, and these choices lead to participation in unpaid work at the expense of paid work. This in turn limits the housing options for women without male partners or for those who have unemployed or poorly paid partners* (Kilgour, 1989). Stephens (1995) has tabled the trends in poverty incidence by household type before and after housing costs for the years 1991 to 1993. His research shows that 46% of single-parent headed households had incomes below the poverty line and that this figure rose to an alarming 72% after housing costs had been paid. The impact of paying housing costs increased the level of poverty of this household type by more than three times that of any other housing type. As at November 1996 there are no figures available for the years beyond 1993, nor does there currently exist any similar figures for female headed households.[28]

Home ownership has advantages over other forms of tenure in the current New Zealand housing market in that it provides security, privacy, control, flexibility, choice, mobility and freedom (Watson 1989). But a number of factors including high house prices in urban centres (particularly in Auckland), high interest rates, difficulty in obtaining finance and women's overall lower wages continue to put home ownership beyond the grasp of many single women (Kilgour, 1989). Sixty percent of women never-married own their houses with a mortgage compared with a national average of 74%.[29] However, the percentage of women never married who own their houses freehold is only 50% of the national average.[30] These figures for women never-married should not be confused with those for 'women alone' - women who are separated have the lowest rate of home ownership in New Zealand - either with a mortgage or without.[31] However, studies show that even when women are not in constrained financial situations they will be discriminated against in the home ownership market (Hyman, 1995). Government policy and financial institutions act together to exclude certain households from achieving home ownership (Watson, 1989). These households are invariably female headed. Women living outside

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[27] The 1991 census report, New Zealanders at Home, reveals that 78% of one-parent families have incomes below $20,000.00 per annum. 81.9% of these households are female headed.
[28] Conversation with R.J. Stephens, Senior Lecturer in Economics, Victoria University of Wellington - 1 November 1996. Stephens is a member of the New Zealand Poverty project team and is the author of 'Housing and Poverty in New Zealand'.
[29] Statistics New Zealand All About Women in New Zealand
[30] Ibid
[31] Ibid

husband/wife households who apply for a mortgage are required to present a stronger credit and income status than single men (Hyman, 1995). Watson's research on sex discrimination by financial institutions revealed a litany of chauvinistic and paternalistic practices that reflected the presumptions on the part of bankers as to what is the ideal and expected domestic role for women. The expectation is that her role lies outside the economic imperative of home ownership.

Part of the current problems in boarding houses has grown out of the perception that single people's housing is not as important or not as deserving as married couples or women with children . Households which do not fit the traditional nuclear family form have been marginalised and viewed as deviant. Watson (1989) points out that they are constantly put onto the 'special needs' pile. This is despite the growing body of evidence that women headed households are fast becoming the norm in New Zealand society. The assumption is that single people are young and migratory - a temporary stage on the way to marriage and normality (Watson, 1989). The exclusion of single persons from housing policies will impact more upon women because of their inferior economic position. Ministry of Housing reports (1994) show that single adults were the most affected by the housing reforms in terms of affordability. The evidence was sufficient to compel the Minister into raiding the accommodation supplement for this group. What is needed is a housing policy that integrates single women's housing need into housing allocation and assessment procedures. Until then, single women who cannot access cheap housing will have to remain in abusive relationships, form new partnerships, or stay with friends and relatives. In all cases she remains both dependant and insecure.

Charity, Paternalism and Nimbyism

The rapid withdrawal of the state from housing and welfare has lead to the growth in demand for the services provided by church and volunteer organisations. Kelsey (1995) asserts that while the government reforms in New Zealand have failed to reduce dependence on the state, they did give rise to a new and profound form of dependency. She quotes policy analyst Jonathan Boston - *by self-reliance the government appears to mean not that individuals should be able to care for themselves, but that they should become dependent on their immediate families and voluntary organisations rather than on the state.* This reliance on the public to voluntarily provide for the welfare of the poor and needy reflects a return to the charity model prevalent late last century. The charity model as it is exemplified in New Zealand has many inherent weaknesses, the most significant being its inability to

provide for equity and its support of the concept of the deserving and undeserving poor. The charity model reaffirms the status of the giver and the receiver. Inherent in the politicians statements is the notion that the poor can alleviate their situation by being thrifty while the absolute destitute can be helped by charity.

It can be seen that church and community groups must now compete with one another for funding from a limited public purse. It might speculated that to be successful in these bidding rounds, an organisation will need to be attached to an established institution and comparatively well resourced in terms of assets and staff. Groups that are openly critical of government policy or who work in areas of marginality such as prostitution, AIDS or single women's needs are required to compete with more conservative organisations to obtain state support. Small or emerging organisations are often ignored in funding allocation, particularly if they represent an issue or problem that is not recognised. This can prevent early intervention into problem areas that later become epidemic in their impact. Also ignored are those communities in need who endeavour to represent themselves instead of operating though an intermediary organisation. These 'consumer' groups (such as Psychiatric Survivors and Coalition of State Housing Tenants for example) are perceived as radical or dissident and receive no 'standing' in the established helping-agency market.

The annual allocation of funding from the Community Funding Agency creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and insecurity for voluntary organisations. Organisations are unable to commit to capital investment or to plan their financial futures with any certainty. Paid staff are particularly vulnerable to redundancy. Reliance on unskilled volunteers frustrates the potential to plan ahead or to maintain continuity in service delivery. Operating within the short-term and being reliant upon volunteer labour can frustrate efforts to collect data or to undertake research.

The apparent preference of the government funding agencies to allocate significant amounts of money to the church based organisations has the potential to manifest itself in an insidious manner. Although some of the churches have worked hard at achieving a male/female balance within their decision-making bodies, this does not necessarily mean they will apply a gender analysis in the setting of objectives. It is still possible that innovative women-focused programmes may threaten these well-meaning, but potentially paternalistic, authorities. The stereotypes of deserving and undeserving homeless women described in Part One of this thesis may not always be absent in the mindset of those who control the church purse-strings. While homeless men are often seen to be 'down on their luck' and victims of current day market forces, a homeless

woman's situation may be more likely to be viewed as a result of her non-conformity to social expectation. There is, perhaps, a potential within the mainstream helping organisations for the development of autonomous women-focused projects. Such groups would be empowered to set their own agendas and to provide critiques of their umbrella organisations without fear of censure or reprisal.

Such paternalism is not restricted to the churches. The women's refuges have encountered similar paternalism in their attempts to foster independence and autonomy. In Hamilton in 1987 the opposition of a neighbourhood to the siting of a women's refuge combined with a bureaucratic planning process to obscure the needs of women and children escaping domestic violence. Planning professionals used their expertise to debate technical aspects of the proposal such as site suitability and effect on amenity thus obscuring the social implications of their actions - *the social context of the activity was much more difficult to quantify and substantiate in the 'objective' terms of functionalist planning methodology* (Dixon, 1991). It also required that an already under-funded community organisation find the resources necessary to participate in expensive conflict resolution processes. The response of the planning tribunal judge was to create rules for supervision that denigrated the status of the refuge residents from adult women to that of children. Inherent in his decision was the belief that adult women living without a male require supervision and observation beyond that required by the rest of the community. Cases such as this also highlight the conflict and difficulties that arise when state initiated programmes conflict with local authority policy and rules. It supports an argument for linkages and partnerships between central funding agencies, community organisations and local authorities. It also provides a reason why local authorities can not abdicate themselves from the housing debate.

The Hamilton refuge example cited above also raises questions of the powerful effect of NIMBYism[32] in the application of local authority planning mechanisms. Issues of social importance as indicated in the Hamilton refuge case are hidden within a planning discourse that disguises conservatism and ignorance behind Resource Management Act rhetoric. In Bitossi v Kapiti Coast District Council[33] residents of Wairere Grove in Paraparumu sought to prevent the use of neighbourhood property by Birthright Inc for use as an emergency dwelling. The resident's claims that the house would detract from the amenities of the area and be an unwarranted intrusion in their lives echoes the claims of residents in the Hamilton refuge case. Similarly, in 1992 two psychiatric

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[32] Not In My Back Yard
[33] Mr & Mrs GA Bitossi & Ors v Kapiti Coast District Council - W88/92

nurses who wanted to set up a home for people with psychiatric disabilities in an old mansion in the Dunedin suburb of Belleknowes also met with public protest. Residents formed a support group to oppose the application - their protest was based on issues relating to impact on the environment and dangers to the public with psychiatrically disturbed people living so close. Cases such as these illustrate how planning discourse manifests in operatives that endorse societal expectations of the correct role of women within society. Despite the overwhelming evidence that points to the increase in the single-parent and single-person households the state continues to provide mechanisms that maintain these households in a position of marginality. It also raises perennial issues regarding the exorbitant resources required by small or marginalised groups, including tangata whenua, if they are required to participate within decision-making processes under the RMA.

Boarding House Issues

New Zealand has a history of taking in lodgers and boarders. Some boarding houses were purpose built to house the men women and children who flocked to the cities in the last half of the nineteenth century, while many rooms were also created within existing households. The provision of lodging within established households was commonly used as means of income for widows and women bringing up children on their own. Concern was expressed at this time by authorities regarding over-crowding in lodging house rooms where whole families sometimes occupied single rooms. Their concern was not just for the health and well-being of the household. The cohabitation of many strangers in close proximity to one another was seen to compromise the sanctity of the individual family. Boarding houses were generally regarded with some negativity and viewed as a *breeding ground for an insolent and indolent urban poor* (Ferguson, 1994). Accordingly, male lodgers were not given the vote until 1875 and even then, enfranchisement did not extend to lodgers who shared rooms (Ferguson, 1994). Lodging houses were cheaper than boarding houses but boarding houses were considered to be more respectable. This distinction between lodging and boarding houses was lost in 1941 when a government committee delicensed lodging houses and set similar standards in place for the two. This, in effect, made them equally priced. Ferguson has suggested that this represented a need to force transients into different forms of accommodation and prevented the family unit from sharing with others - *These provisions reveal a committee with a narrow concept of how people ought to live....Faced with sections of the community that wanted and needed to live in this sort of accommodation, the committee could only see such a life as an aberration.* In

1926 15.9% of all households in the four main urban centres had boarders (Ferguson, 1994).

Within this environment women were considered to be in need of protection - both morally and physically (Mostoller, 1985). The scarcity of employment during the depression years meant that boarding house operators were reluctant to let to women because they could not guarantee their rent payments (Ferguson, 1994). Hence the reduced economic position of women forced them into the rougher lodging houses and transient lifestyles. Eventually the plight of women in lodging houses came to the attention of church and charity organisations who wanted to rescue the women in an effort to ...... *encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers and habits of thrift* (Ferguson, 1994).

The opposition by both the state and the charity organisations to lodging and boarding houses impacted particularly harshly on women. It prevented access to one of the few means of independent income for female landlords and it removed access to cheap accommodation for women on restricted incomes. While past governments have been emphatic that a woman living alone will not have access to subsidised housing they have failed to ensure that she has an adequate alternative. In the late 1950's the Minister for State Advances stated the government's position - *single women in employment are better able to look after themselves, and to get reasonable accommodation in rooms or as boarders* (Ferguson, 1994). However, apart from some measures briefly introduced by the last Labour Government late in their administration (1989), little has been done to ensure that such accommodation is either available or reasonable. This may be viewed as a consistent effort by the state to ensure that women alone are unable to live autonomous or independent lifestyles - in effect they are punished for their overt refusal to conform to the family stereotype.

By the early 1980's Auckland was experiencing a rapid loss of boarding houses due to gentrification of the inner-city suburbs. This brought about a dramatic change to the texture of many neighbourhoods. Diversity of race and socio-economics was transplanted by a predominantly white middle-class population. Shopping precincts were transformed from alleys of second hand shops, butchers and public bars into boulevards of boutique cafes, wine shops and designer clothes. Consequently it became increasingly difficult for the predominantly poor occupants of boarding houses to survive in these more affluent neighbourhoods. While many of the boarding houses were demolished to make way for development, others were restored to single-family homes. In 1983 the NZ Herald quoted a Housing Corporation manager as saying that

the number of beds in boarding houses in Auckland had fallen from 1872 to 1232 during that year alone.[34] In February 1989 a study of Auckland boarding houses claimed that the number of boarding houses and beds available was rapidly diminishing (Parfitt, 1989). The Minister for Housing Helen Clark acknowledged that *the rate of shrinkage in the amount of boarding house accommodation was exceeding the decrease in demand.*[35] She said she would put together a programme to halt this shrinkage and would also consider vital changes to the Residential Tenancies Act with respect to boarding houses. In December that year the Labour Government announced a package of funding to private individual and non-profit groups wanting to set up or maintain boarding houses in high demand city areas. The Boarding House Acquisition Programme recognised the stress being placed on boarding house communities in areas of rapid population growth and gentrification. It offered a variety of packages designed to create more single-room occupancies and to maintain and redevelop existing stocks. Unfortunately the programme met with little response. Only one boarding house was set up under this scheme - the Wellington Women's Boarding House - and no other assistance was given out. The Ministry of Housing claims that one reason for the lack of uptake was probably the very high ("prohibitive") return rate required on the property by the conditions of the scheme - *the Wellington Women's Boarding House only remained in the programme because the rate of return on the property was lowered from 10 per cent to a net rate of 5 per cent.*[36] It would appear that any future schemes will have to take into account the severe financial constraints under which most not-for-profit groups operate, and the obvious implications this has on their ability to pay the costs of borrowing money. The end result is that they are forced to pass the costs on to those people to whom they provide shelter, who once again, are those people least able to afford it.

A national housing survey was conducted in 1939 but vital data relating to age, gender and boarding houses etc was never published. However, a Wellington engineer claimed at this time that the worst cases of overcrowding and substandard conditions were to be found in boarding houses (Ferguson, 1994). Nearly fifty years later the Royal Commission found that accommodation in boarding houses *is often very poor quality, and inappropriate to the needs of these people* (Roberts, 1988). Of those that remain today, most are maintained to a minimal standard.

The single, most significant issue for women in boarding houses, however, is their lack of protection under the Residential Tenancies Act (see previous section on Women

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[34] Clark acts on boarding house crisis- article by Peter Lowe - NZ Herald July 1983
[35] Quoted in Housing News Vol. 1, Issue 2, July 1989 p1
[36] Personal correspondence from Ministry of Housing, 15 July 1996.

and Safety). People who live in boarding houses have no enforceable rights as have other tenants renting within New Zealand. They have no security of tenure and no mechanisms for hearing disputes.

Local authority issues

Under the Local Government Act 1974 local authorities were required to license and keep a register of all boarding houses in their districts and to ensure the buildings were safe and secure. These provisions included ventilation, fire safety and sanitation. Inspections of premises were conducted annually, sometimes more frequently if owners or managers were known to infringe certain provisions in the Act. The local authority inspections, however, were never seen to extend to the management of the premises or to the welfare of the people residing in them[37]. This is despite s636(a) of the Local Government Act that provides for inspection of residential institutions where a disabled person resides where the authority *is concerned for the well-being or interests of any disabled resident.* [38] The local authority saw its sole function as being to inspect the physical maintenance of the buildings. Residents were never interviewed or spoken to during site visits. However, inspectors under this old administration claim they were often horrified at the circumstances in which people lived in boarding houses but none felt that anything could be done by their administration, it was 'just a fact of life'.[39]

Although these inspections did not provide active protection for the welfare of residents, they did at least provide a small aperture through which outsiders could gain a glimpse of anything that might be considered extreme in its practice. However, since 1991 the licensing and subsequent inspection of boarding houses has been abandoned. Boarding houses now come under the Buildings Act 1991 and a licence for their operation and management is no longer required. Boarding house owners are now required to obtain an *independent qualified person* to perform their inspections and to complete a compliance schedule. The owner submits a compliance schedule to the local authority, who in turn, check it and issue a warrant of fitness. Such a move is in keeping with the shift to economic efficiencies and privatisation within local government that has occurred over the past five years. It also reveals an alarming shift

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[37] Conversation with John Campbell and Colin Craig - Senior Environmental Development Officers, Auckland City Council, April 1996.
[38] Many of the people living in boarding houses are in receipt of the Disabled Persons Benefit, as were all the women interviewed for the research study attached to this thesis.
[39] Conversation with John Campbell and Colin Craig - Op Cit.

away from what constituted an already very slim monitoring programme for boarding houses. Boarding houses residents, already denied protection under the Residential Tenancies Act, are now further alienated from local authority protection.

Many local authorities presume that housing is the responsibility of the state rather than a local responsibility. Seldom do local authorities have explicit housing policies nor have they looked at their housing related responsibilities in a strategic context. This represents a common belief that housing involvement is concerned with direct provision. Traditionally there has been a failure to perceive the vital link between physical planning and social outcomes. Housing is influenced within the community by a number of local authority activities - regulatory responsibilities, infrastructure, rating policies and provision of community facilities. Local authorities promotion of industry and commerce can create significant demands for housing. Seldom do local authorities take cognisance of the fact that these seemingly neutral activities can have a profound influence on who is able to live where - *There has been a longstanding emphasis on processes rather than outcomes, on the physical environment rather than people, and on ratepayers rather than all residents* (Purdon, 1991).

There is a wide variance in local authority involvement in housing across New Zealand. Some local authorities have direct involvement in housing stocks - particularly in the provision of pensioner housing, while other authorities are attempting to divest themselves of any housing responsibilities whatsoever. While the Christchurch City Council has developed strategic housing policies which link housing issues with social and economic development, the Auckland City Council continues to ignore its growing population of homeless persons.[40] It has not developed a housing policy, claiming that housing provision is not part of its core business. It should be recognised that this is a choice - not a confinement. The Local Government Act 1974 makes ample provision for local authority involvement in housing and community welfare. Under 37(k) the general purpose of the Act includes recognising communities of interest, enforcing appropriate rights and choosing between different kinds of local public facilities and services. Specific provisions are also made for council's direct involvement in housing. Council may erect dwellings and either sell or lease them to a person or organisation (LGA s552). They may advance money for long term purchase, may provide mortgage finance and may guarantee or subsidise loans from other financial institutions (LGA ss555-558; ss556 -571). Ample provision is made to enable the local authority to participate in the housing market, either through direct

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[40] Auckland City is currently embroiled in controversy over its plans to sell 679 houses it bought using low interest loans from the government to provide housing for those in need.

provision, assisting the market through incentive or by entering into partnerships with other housing providers. The 'core business' argument used by Auckland City is a red herring that obscures community well-being within market-based reasoning. It also raises fundamental questions of the purpose and role of the local authority. Is it in keeping with s37 of the Local Government Act? Does it promote well-being and community good? Does it fulfil the social contract it made with the community via history and promises? Because of its close proximity to the community, local government involvement in housing is seen to be more advantageous than central government involvement. It is positioned to recognise problems before they impact at a national level and can provide for a more direct and focused response. The local authority is more able to coordinate physical and social infrastructure and may be seen to be more accountable for their actions. However, local responsibility can also create barriers to intervention. At the local level there may exist a lack of skills or finances and a political unwillingness to take on a greater role. Some local politicians may choose to not see beyond the issues that are relevant to the ward or municipality in which they dwell.

Hucker[41] argues that the reluctance by present day local authorities to involve themselves in housing and other community interests can be seen to stem from two major influences - traditional practice and the intellectual sources of local government reform. Traditional practice has manifested itself in three distinct areas. Firstly, community issues have generally revolved around the four r's - rubbish, rats, rates and roads. Secondly, local government has focused on getting people elected to administer the business of the local authority as opposed to focussing on the debate of issues. Hence major policy divides are uncommon in local authority elections as they are in central government elections. Thirdly, local government has traditionally played no role in the distribution of income in the interests of greater equality. This has always been seen as the prerogative of central government. The effect of these traditions in alienating local authority practice from community welfare has been exacerbated by the market-based philosophies that underpinned the local government reforms. The deregulation and privatisation of local authority activities has erased their potential to be effective political units. The local authority is now seen as a service delivery, regulatory and administrative unit but not as a political unit that links these with community interests. The larger authorities are remote from their communities and the community boards set up to narrow this gap are in an advisory, as opposed to a

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[41] Interview with Rev. Dr. Bruce Hucker, Auckland City Councillor and Senior Lecturer in Planning at University of Auckland - 20 May 1996

decision-making position. They are dependant on the local authority for funding and devolved powers.

Mental Health Issues

In a study of housing stressors it was found that inadequate housing can contribute negatively to health or well-being (Kearns et al, 1992). In particular inadequate housing was found to exacerbate mental illness (Kearns and Smith, 1993). Residential mobility was a significant source of stress (Kearns et al, 1992). It was also found that people with mental health problems were the most distressed in the study and that psychiatric respondents from the Auckland region appeared to be undergoing more housing related stress than respondents from any other region. Of particular concern was the high level of fear amongst single respondents of 'cracking up' over their housing problems. The study also reported significantly more dwelling-related health problems amongst Aucklanders compared with the Christchurch sample. The outcomes of stress were manifested in psychiatric distress, physical illness and interruptions to normal patterns of socialisation (Kearns et al, 1992). A key finding of Kearn's research was that the respondents satisfaction with their dwelling was a key predictor of their general health.

The boarding houses in the inner-city suburbs of Auckland are the main source of accommodation for the mentally disabled in Auckland (Smith et al, 1994). Not only are there more previously institutionalised people living in the community but there are also many more people who have never been institutionalised (Smith, 1994). All are placing a strain on the boarding house stocks. Deinstitutionalisation was seen to be a response to a diverse criticism of psychiatric hospitals (Crystal, 1984). While this is true to a certain extent, it was also facilitated by the perception of the costs of running large institutions and the availability of drugs which reduced psychotic symptoms. Supposedly, resources would follow patients into the community where ongoing care and support would be provided. Increasing criticism of the deinstitutionalisation process reveals that these provisions have been sadly lacking. The mentally disabled are seriously constrained by under-funding of psychiatric services, unemployment, inadequate benefits, difficult housing markets and resistance from communities ('Mason Report', 1996[42]). New Zealand's experience echoes that found overseas where a preoccupation with the individual pathology of mental illness takes precedence over the efficacy of service delivery (Merves, 1992)

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[42] Ministerial Inquiry to the Minister of Health (1996) Inquiry under s47 of the Health and Disability Act 1993 in respect of certain mental health services Ministry of Health, Wellington

The accommodation needs of those discharged from psychiatric hospitals and for those registered with the psychiatric services is typically catered for in privately administered rest homes, hospitals and boarding houses which provide full board and lodging. They are registered with the Regional Health Authority (RHA) under the Disabled Persons Community Welfare Act. The RHA purchases the services of these 'service providers'. Housing is divided into three separate levels of housing and funded according to the needs assessment associated with each separate level. Residents benefits are paid directly to the accommodation provider by the Social Welfare Department.

Privately administered boarding houses may or may not choose to register as a service provider with the RHA. However, under the Act, all boarding houses which house five or more persons who are in receipt of a Disabled Persons Benefit are required to register with the RHA whether or not it is actively pursuing service provider status. This raises obvious questions about the lack of protection for residents in houses with less than five tenants. It also appears that there is no one to actively police or monitor this requirement. Hence, there is also the potential for a wilful non-compliance by landlords who may claim not to know of their resident's income arrangements. Their reluctance to register may also stem from the fact that they accommodate a relatively mobile (and hence, constantly changing) population.

Five years ago the health authorities in Auckland were receiving flak for the low quality of residential service provision within the mental health arena. The rating system set up under this old system gave a possible score of 300. While the average score was 150, one central Auckland boarding house had scored 15 (metro June 1991). A manager of the pre-RHA Auckland Area Health Board was quoted in the NZ Herald as saying - *It is too easy for entrepreneurs to set themselves up to provide accommodation for the mentally disabled without having to show desirable qualities or concern for the boarders. Managers should be compelled to provide services separate and distinct from ordinary accommodation* (Thompson, 1991).

However, the Northern RHA Residential Support Services has recently set up a revised monitoring system as a means of ensuring that the service provider adheres to a minimum standard. Monitoring is conducted across sixteen quality areas and rates the houses on a five point scale. Interviews are conducted with managers, staff, residents and their families and cover policy, safety, management practices, staff training and complaints procedures. Each service provider who has been monitored receives critical feedback in the form of commendations, recommendations and

requirements. Follow up procedures are tailored to the outcomes of each individual monitoring.[43]

Auckland has 3000 - 5000 long-term mentally ill, but only 460 beds in registered homes (Dominion 30.9.94). Many of these people are living in boarding houses that remain unregistered and unmonitored by the RHA. The Minister of Housing (1993 - 1996) has acknowledged the importance of channelling more funds into the accommodation needs of people discharged from psychiatric institutions and has claimed that 250 additional community houses would be either built or bought in the 1995/96 year - *this policy ensures that anyone discharged from a psychiatric institution will have somewhere suitable to live and will be provided with the necessary support services*.[44] This statement raises an important issue. It does not account for the myriad of people who move on from RHA-registered places to unregistered (and hence unmonitored) private boarding houses.[45] Neither does it account for those people with a current or recurring psychiatric disability who are not or were not specifically part of the deinstitutionalisation process. If there is the acknowledgment that people with a psychiatric disability need special support and protection, and if it is accepted that the majority of people living in boarding houses have a history of psychiatric illness, then it stands to reason that the same measures for monitoring and quality assurance implemented by the RHA must be carried over or parallelled in the non-RHA-registered sector of boarding house accommodation.

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[43] Conversation with Michelle Farrell - Northern Regional Health Authority, Residential Support Services - 16 September 1996.

[44] Letter from Minister of Housing to New Zealand Council of Social Services 17 August 1995.

[45] Deacon et al (1995) support the right of people to exit from services if they so wish Crystal (1984) describes the 'revolving door' population which shuttles from hospital to shelter to boarding house without ever establishing a long-term home. He cites studies which report incidences of people falling through the cracks of welfare services. Previous studies on housing and homelessness that have incorporated a longitudinal component into their studies have expressed difficulty in keeping up with some of their initial respondents - *The respondents who were lost in the follow-up tended to be among those in greatest housing need* (Kearns et al, 1992).

Part Three[46]

Chapter Seven

The Research Aims and Objectives

TITLE:

<u>In Her Place</u> - a study of women and personal safety in Auckland boarding houses.

RATIONALE:

In 1991 the Pitt Street congregation of the Auckland Methodist Central Parish and Mission established a drop-in centre as a 'safe' place for women and children - the 'Take-a-Break Women's Centre. It quickly became used by a number of marginalised women who needed respite from the rigours of the their living situations. A proportion of the people who visit the centre are literally homeless while many others live in boarding houses and a variety of other forms of accommodation.

In mid-1995 the co-ordinator of Take-a-Break reported that various comments made by visitors to the centre suggested that women living in boarding houses were being exposed to situations that made them fearful for their safety. Descriptions of typical incidents suggested that perhaps certain dynamics occurring in boarding houses rendered them particularly unsafe for women. The various incidents included accounts of sexual harassment, sexual assault, threats and other dynamics that operated to keep women fearful. Also of concern were reports that bathrooms and bedrooms were not able to be fully secured and that there were generally no systems in place for controlling the issue and return of keys to tenants.

Initial investigation brought some interesting facts to light. Firstly, the paucity of literature or research on boarding houses generally. What little there is in existence is generally positioned within mental health discourse and attempts to assess the accommodation needs of those with a psychiatric disability. Secondly, none of the existing studies provide for a gendered focus. Although existing studies will state the male to female ratio of the sample, this differential is never analysed alongside each of the variables. Although some studies do report incidents of sexual harassment this is usually only when a subject has specifically raised the issue. That is, the studies have not explicitly sought to elicit this information. Thirdly, boarding houses are not

covered by the Residential Tenancies Act. Women who live in boarding houses have no protection from either landlords, tenants or visitors to the boarding house. The local authority requirements that stem from the Local Government Act only require that boarding houses are maintained to certain physical standards. There is no provision for monitoring service delivery or the well-being of persons who dwell within them. The Disabled Persons Community Welfare Act requires registration of boarding houses with more than five residents receiving disability benefit. There is an obvious implication of a lack of protection for residents in houses with less than five tenants. There is also the potential for a wilful non-compliance by landlords who may claim not to know of their resident's income arrangements. Their reluctance to register may also stem from the fact that they accommodate a relatively mobile (and hence, constantly changing) population.

AIM:

This study aims to explore the operatives of safety and security in the lives of women who live in boarding houses. It seeks to identify the physical, emotional and sexual vulnerability that women experience in relation to their accommodation. The study will endeavour to define the level of disempowerment these women experience as a result of their housing environment.

The study will strive to answer eight fundamental questions:

1. Are there particular incidents or dynamics that catalyse a woman's shift to a boarding house?

2. What are the women's perceptions of the physical environment within the boarding house?

3. What existing levels of maintenance and care do they find non/acceptable?

4. How fearful are women for their safety within the boarding house?

5. What are the women's individual experiences of violence or harassment within the boarding house?

6. What levels of protection are available to them within the boarding house?

7. What are the women's experiences of safety and security within their previous housing environments?

8. What are their needs/desires within the boarding house - what are the key areas where intervention could improve the quality of the housing experience?

PRIOR RESEARCH

Until very recently there has been very little research on the accommodation needs of people living in boarding houses in New Zealand. Most of the existing studies are in response to the closure of psychiatric hospitals and the awareness of the resultant growth in demand for single-room occupancy accommodation. While the earlier studies focus on issues of supply and demand, the more recent studies reflect an awareness of the need for consumer self-determination in the area of service provision and support. In all these studies more men that women were interviewed. None of the studies provide for a gender-based analysis.

- Ian Sheerin & R. Gale - Quality of Life in Boarding Houses 1983

This is a Christchurch study of the impact of boarding house accommodation on people with long-term mental disorders and their caregivers. Over half the residents interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with their accommodation. This compared markedly with the health professionals, 80% of whom expressed satisfaction with the boarding houses. A lack of social support was identified as a key issue for people in boarding houses compared with other forms of accommodation. The study does not identify the ratio of males to females in the sample and women are not singled out for mention in the document.

- Derek Sole - Housing for Singles - the Boarding House Option 1988

This study examines the implications of the reduction in numbers of boarding houses in Wellington. It is mainly concerned with the loss of beds and the inability of the market to stem this loss. It views the boarding house as a valid permanent option for single people and calls for a partnership between government and community agencies to share the responsibilities for funding and management. The study cites 'problem people' as the major concern of boarding house proprietors. The author argues that if these 'problem people' were provided with the supportive accommodation they require, this would release more beds in boarding houses to single persons who do not need supervision and support.

The study claimed that men in boarding houses out-number women by 4 to 1. It does not ask why this might be the case. The proprietors of boarding houses frequently mentioned women as a problem, to which the author responds *this may be saying more about the manager than the tenant, although several said they had some bad experiences involving womens' tenancies.* Once again, it may well be that women who are disruptive are considered abnormal or deviant while similar behaviour in men is considered to be more acceptable.[47]

- David Robinson Housing for Single People 1989

This study devotes a section to boarding houses in Wellington. It reiterates the earlier recommendation made by Sole of retaining and extending current levels of boarding house stocks in Wellington. It does not mention women.

More recently there have been a series of accommodation needs surveys in the Auckland area. These have largely been in response to the growing awareness of the difficulties experienced by people with mental health disabilities who have rejoined the community over the past ten to fifteen years. Despite the fact that more women than men are using the mental health services in Auckland, men still outnumber women in the samples used for these studies.[48] The principle of consumer self-determination is seen to drive these studies.

- David McGeorge - The Framework Trust Accommodation Study 1989

A study of the workers registered with the Framework Trust. Women represented 25% of the sample. The study measured levels of satisfaction with housing and other issues but this is not broken into sex differentials. However, it did identify violence as a reason for females lower level of satisfaction with their accommodation and a contributing reason for their desire to move. This study recommended that *issues relating to violence and safety be discussed, especially with members of the female population.*

- Robin Kearns Coping and Community Life for People with Chronic Mental Disability in Auckland Dept of Geography University of Auckland 1990

This study examines the housing experiences, residential histories and accommodation preferences of people discharged from psychiatric hospitals. It recognises the

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[47] In discussions with support community personnel it was also mooted that boarding houses are such unpleasant places for women to live in that, in many instances, only the most disruptive or troubled women are prepared to do so.

[48] Dimensions Consultants (1995) Auckland Central Accommodation and Associated Needs Survey Dimensions Auckland p11

importance of the boarding house to the sample population - *over time, the most frequent type of living situation was the boarding house.... with over 35% of all periods of residence being in these dwellings.* The author claims that people with a mental health disability are vulnerable to the problems of housing affordability, availability and accessibility and are particularly disadvantaged on the Auckland housing market. Kearns writes of the trend toward the ghettoisation of homelessness and housing stress within the geographic areas where boarding houses are still prevalent in central Auckland. Concern is raised over the high rates of residential mobility found in this population and the fact that 43% of moves were involuntary.

- Housing Corporation of New Zealand Feedback from Community Consultation Auckland 1990

In 1990 the Housing Corporation consulted an extensive number of statutory and community organisations in Auckland regarding the Corporation's service delivery and resource allocation. Their report documents a number of concerns regarding boarding houses: 1) increasing demand but decreasing supply; 2) costly - requiring people to share rooms; 3)lack of space leads to tension, particularly for psychiatric residents 4) this leads to readmissions and self-mutilation. They cite the need for small, supervised boarding houses but acknowledge that many potential management groups are *already overloaded and preoccupied with own operations.*

- Dimensions - Auckland Central Accommodation & Needs Survey 1995

This is a survey commissioned by Auckland Healthcare and the Framework Trust to find out the needs and views of people who use the mental health services in central Auckland. It includes accommodation, transport, employment and other living needs. Women represented 40% of the sample. The study acknowledges that women with children are *not particularly well represented* in this study. It also argued that until adequate resources are available for research and needs assessment *it is unlikely that the real needs of niche groups of mental health consumers will ever be comprehensively identified or met.* It can only be hoped that women, having made up 40% of the sample, have not been relegated to the category of a 'niche' group. Gender is only used in the analysis of four variables - age, suburb, number of moves in two years and whether or not they were looking for work. This is an in depth survey that produces a range of responses to respondents preferred support and life-style choices. It is a pity the report does not differentiate between male and female responses in their presentation of the data.

- North Health <u>Residential Services Project - Consumer Consultation Report</u> North Health (1996)

This project was put in place in response to North Health's options for purchasing the disabled persons community welfare services from the Community Funding Agency. As with the Dimensions study it asks a series of questions concerning preferred housing and support services. Not surprisingly the majority of those interviewed preferred service delivery that provided for the self-determination of consumers and for the accountability of service providers. Consumers recognised the existence of a significant disparity in the types of processes being utilised by providers - these are split between those that empower and those that trap. Gender analyses are not provided in this study.

It can be seen that six of these seven studies are entirely focused on psychiatric communities. None provide a specific focus on gender or safety. However, all provide data and analysis (albeit brief) on boarding houses. There are no New Zealand studies on the role of the boarding house and its potential for providing stable and affordable accommodation for single people outside of the mental health framework.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The quality of life in Auckland boarding houses is unsatisfactory for males and females alike. The stressful lifestyles of many of the residents can contribute to an atmosphere that is both volatile and unpredictable. This thesis suggests that within such an environment it is women who are the most vulnerable. Due to both their (comparative) physical weakness and to the specific characteristics of gender roles it is women who are most likely to be victimised within a community under stress. Therefore it is considered necessary to apply a gendered focus and analysis of the boarding house experience.

This thesis also maintains that there are a number of factors that have operated to conceal the experience and realities of women in boarding houses. These range from the construction of myths and stereotypes, the gender bias of previous research, the lack of protection in current legislation and the low reportage rate of the women themselves. Concealment of the women who are the most severely affected by abuse is maintained by medication and by the fact that access to these women is frequently controlled by a caregiver who may also be the abuser. It is these, and other dynamics, that have maintained the invisibility of the particular predicament of women who live in boarding houses.

The thesis also positions itself within the debate on the reform and privatisation of both the housing and health "markets" in New Zealand. It examines various local and central government policies and how they have impacted on boarding houses. It also explores the position of boarding houses within the constructs of 'private' and 'public'. It is maintained that those in authority are able to abdicate their responsibilities because boarding houses occupy an ill-defined position within the public/private debate.

Chapter Eight

Methodology and Research Process

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Feminist critiques of mainstream social science claim that women have either been ignored in research studies or that there has operated a basic assumption that men and women's experiences are the same. They claim that women are studied alongside men, but seldom as research subjects in their own right. As a result women's experiences have been systematically distorted and misinterpreted (Wilkinson, 1986; Mies, 1983; Gavey, 1989; Small, 1989). They also claim that research agendas and methodologies are largely controlled by male dominated institutions and are inadequate for the interpretation of women's lives. Within this discourse there has been widespread criticism of traditional positivist methodologies that maintain an androcentric bias (Mies, 1983). Empiricist research has emphasised a value-neutral objectivity in which people become objects of research (Small, 1989). It is also claimed that the public/private divisions discussed earlier in this thesis also have their manifestations in language and this has acted to create gender distortions in research interviews and subsequent interpretations (Cotterell, 1992). It is generally recognised that a shift in ideology must be accompanied by a shift in research practice. Wilkinson (1986) presents feminist research as a dynamic and intersubjective process wherein the interviewer and the interviewee have the same status - they are each participant and collaborator. Wilkinson suggests that this creates the need to examine the moral and political implications of the research practice. Fundamental to an ethical research process is the need to maintain honesty, non-hierarchical processes and a continual awareness of the policy implications of the research (Wilkinson, 1986). In response Mies (1983) has formulated seven methodological guidelines for feminist research:

1) Value free research (neutral and indifferent) must be replaced with a conscious partiality.

2) The view from above must be replaced with the view from below.

3) Researchers should be involved in active participation in movements and struggles.

4)   Change of the status quo becomes the starting point for a scientific quest. (*Disrupting normalcy in order to know it*).

5)   The research process must be a process of conscientisation.

6)   It must be accompanied by a study of women's individual and social history.

7)   It involves collectivisation and dialogue with other feminists.

Dell Small (1989) defines 'participatory research' as the *result of an attempt to develop a satisfactory method in response to a vast unsolved problem of suffering and oppression*. She claims that for too long academic research processes have colonised knowledge and this has disempowered the research subjects - *they gather information from those who do not make decisions in order to make decisions for them*. Knowledge, she claims, is the most important basis of power and control. The people concerned, and not the researcher, must take control of the process of knowing. Method must be matched to need. Like Mies, Small argues that empowerment comes through collectivising the activity of acquiring knowledge.

Cotterill (1992) has examined the difficulties of using participatory methods of investigation that seek to put *the subjective into the knowledge*. Reciprocity invites intimacy and researchers need to know how to distinguish between friendship and friendliness. She discusses issues of friendship, vulnerability and power that can develop between the participants in the interview process. In the name of feminist research we ask women to speak of fears and incidents in a manner that might be construed as exploitative - *I have emerged from interviews with the feeling that my interviewees need to know how to protect themselves from people like me* (Cotterill, 1992). What must be continually questioned is the moral basis of encouraging intimate communication for the purpose of research.

No matter how reciprocal the process, it is the researcher who has ultimate power in that it is she who interprets the data and defines the realities of those she is researching. Usually her results are presented to an audience which is largely inaccessible to those women she has interviewed. She must constantly ensure that her role within the research project is neither authoritative nor protectionist. While she must resist the urge to define the realities of others, she must present her findings in a way that challenges the institutions and structures which sustain and benefit from oppression. She must seek to stimulate change in the status quo without ultimately being able to control that change. Therefore her findings must lead to recommendations that can be concretised into policy that enable and empower those who remain silent within research practice.

Mandate for Research Project

The mandate for this research project came directly from Take-a-Break. The co-ordinator of the centre (who resigned in October 1995) recognised the need for investigation but lacked both the time and the resources to devote to a lengthy research project. She then approached a senior lecturer at the University of Auckland with specialist knowledge in women's housing issues and suggested the need for an initial investigation. The lecturer recommended the project to a student who had developed a body of knowledge in women's issues and gender analyses. Although it may have been ideal, within Mies (1983) interpretation, for the research to have been undertaken solely from within Take-a-Break, a lack of resources prevented this. However, it can be seen that Take-a-Break initiated the partnership with the University and every effort was made, subsequently, to ensure that Take-a-Break had control over the research process.

Monitoring Group

Given the previous lack of connection (credibility) the researcher had established with Take-a-Break it was decided to establish a group of five women to give feedback to the researcher on the validity or relevance of her research to the community in question. The formation of this group not only ensured that the researcher's endeavours remained transparent to Take-a-Break, but it also created a forum through which she could receive support. The monitoring group met regularly throughout the year and consisted of representatives from four organisations:

Jean Brookes - Co-ordinator - Take-a-Break Women's Centre (1996 -)
Chona Telford - Maori Health Promotion Worker - Take-a-Break Women's Centre
Bethne Smith - Homeless Team Worker - Taylor Centre (Mental Health Services)
Mary Caygill - Lecturer - St John's Theological College

The fifth woman selected for the monitoring group (who's original idea it was to perform this research) was unable to attend the meetings due to work commitments. However, she read the draft manuscript and provided invaluable feedback. She was- Debbie Hager, previous co-ordinator of the Take-a-Break Woman's Centre and currently employed by the Saftinet Domestic Violence Centre.

The team monitored the preparation of the questionnaire, the conduct of the interview process and the presentation and interpretation of the results. Each chapter of the thesis was presented to the group for feedback.

Consciousness-raising

Prior to conducting the study, the researcher spent 12 weeks visiting the Take-a-Break centre at regular intervals. This enabled the women to get used to seeing her there and it provided an opportunity for women to ask questions about the study. More importantly, it gave the researcher an opportunity to familiarise herself with the issues and dynamics relevant to the women's lifestyles and experiences.

Sample Selection

The sample was selected by way of an advertisement placed on the noticeboards at the Take-a-Break Women's Centre. The advertisement was approved by the University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee and asked for participation from any women who either currently or previously had resided in a boarding house in Auckland. The advertisement was supported by the Take-a-Break staff members who were always on hand to discuss the project and to answer any queries.

It was acknowledged from the outset that it might be difficult getting the women to participate in the project. It was considered that many of the women may harbour a general mistrust of the 'white academic process' and its representatives. Some would be apprehensive about the interrogative nature of the questionnaire and the personal information that needed to be divulged, while others would recognise no immediate personal benefit or gain from participating in the project. During the initial stages of the project the researcher was approached by a representative from Psychiatric Survivors Inc. who expressed his group's interest in participating in the research. Accordingly, an advertisement was also placed in the drop-in centre at Psychiatric Survivors Richmond Road premises.

A decision was made to interview between 12 and 15 women, based on the anthropological explanation of *interviewing until no new information is coming up and then doing two more interviews just to be sure*.[49] Potter and Wetherall (1987) have supported this recommendation - *If one is interested in discursive forms, ten interviews might provide as much valid information as several hundred responses to a*

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[49] Quoting Doctor Fiona Cram, Psychology Dept, University of Auckland

structured opinion poll....small samples or a few interviews are generally quite adequate for investigating an interesting and practically important range of phenomena...... more interviews can often simply add to the labour involved without adding anything to the analysis. A sample size of 12 was used in an exploratory study of homeless women at a Brighton drop-in centre conducted by Tomas and Dittmar (1995). Gavey's (1992) study on sexual coercion interviewed six women to uncover their experiences of coerced sexual activity.

Eventually seven women from Take-a-Break and five women from Psychiatric Survivors indicated their willingness to participate in the interviews. All twelve women were subsequently interviewed. Five women were currently living in boarding houses, seven women had previously lived in a boarding house.

Normative Survey

The survey consisted of 79 questions and took approximately 40 minutes to complete (see appendix 1). The majority of the questions were closed. However, the interview process permitted elaboration at any point. The questions were grouped under seven thematic issues:

1) Length of time spent in boarding houses and reasons for moving in or out of these
2) Physical maintenance and related sense of security
3) Management practices
4) Preference for women only or mixed boarding houses
5) Personal experiences of violence and harassment
6) Experience and ideals of personal safety and security
7) Personal statistics

Some issues were visited more than once throughout the survey.

Prior to the interviews the survey form was subjected to University of Auckland Human Subjects Ethics Committee scrutiny and was subsequently approved by them.

Interview Process

In all cases the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews and recorded the responses. The process was made as informal as possible and the women were

encouraged to comment or elaborate throughout the interview. These comments were recorded as accurately as possible on the back of the survey forms.

Showcards were used for those questions that required selecting an answer from a range of possible responses (see appendix 2). This was considered particularly useful in assisting women to answer sensitive questions to which they may not want to vocalise their responses. For instance Showcard G listed a number of unwanted activities experienced by women in boarding houses - these ranged from sexual harassment to sexual and physical violation. Women were able to state the letter attached to each activity rather than describe the activity itself.

Due to the sensitive nature of some of the questions it was considered necessary to conduct the interviews at a place that was familiar to the women and that ideally provided counselling or support should these be required. All seven interviews with Take-a-Break women were conducted in a private space at Take-a-Break when skilled social workers were on duty. Of the five women from Psychiatric Survivors, three were interviewed in one morning at one of their homes with their friends present; one was interviewed at the Psychiatric Survivors premises and one was interviewed at the private hospital where she is currently resident.

Support Community Interviews

Approximately twenty interviews were conducted with individuals who are involved or connected with the welfare or administration of women who live in boarding houses. These interviews were unstructured and informal. Information was sought according to the experience of the interviewee. All were asked to give their general impressions of the predicament faced by women who live in boarding houses. This exercise was initially regarded as a fact-finding and conscientising process for the interviewer. However, the information gained was of such significance that it was decided to include some of the responses as part of the research findings. In terms of the intent of Mies (1983) guidelines for feminist research these interviews took the form of discussions that not only conscientised those involved, but also assisted in collectivising the research process and stimulated community dialogue.

The organisations that participated in these interviews were:

Community of Refuge Trust
Ponsonby Community Constable

Tenants Protection Association

Psychiatric Survivors Inc.

Auckland City Mission

Monte Cecilia House Trust

SAFTINET Domestic Violence Centre

YWCA

Boarding house operator

Prostitutes Collective

470 - Boarding house for gays, lesbians

Ponsonby Baptist Church - Breaking the Silence

Auckland City Council

Methodist City Mission

Homeless Team

St James Centre

Taylor Centre

Ethical Considerations

The form and process of this research project was subjected to University of Auckland Human Subjects Research Ethics Committee scrutiny. The procedures for advertising the project, locating a sample and obtaining consent from participants were all in accordance with the Committee's guidelines. The monitoring group sessions also provided a forum for the discussion and debate of ethical and moral concerns surrounding the content of this document.

Chapter Nine

Results

1. INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN WHO RESIDE OR HAVE RESIDED IN A BOARDING HOUSE IN AUCKLAND

Length of time spent in boarding houses

- Of the women currently living in a boarding house, all have resided there for more than 1 month.
- The majority (64%) of women interviewed had spent 2 or more years living in boarding houses.
- A majority (64%) had a shortest stay of 1 month or more.
- A majority (64%) had stayed in 3 or less boarding houses.
- A majority (64%) had a longest stay of 1 year or more.

These findings imply some stability in the housing histories of the respondents and questions presumed notions of the transience or mobility of women in boarding houses. However, this factor may be influenced by the fact that many of the women interviewed were no longer living in a boarding house. This might imply that the sample was made up predominantly of women who were more able to affect change in their personal circumstances ie that they were more functional and hence more likely to achieve periods of stability within their housing patterns. The women who are highly mobile within the boarding house populations may have been obscured in the sample selection process.

Reason for moving to current boarding house

- Very few women were living with family or relations prior to coming to their current (or last) boarding house.
- Most (64%) were leaving an unsatisfactory situation (relationship breakdown; fear of violence; didn't like the people they were living with).
- None had come from another boarding house. A third were leaving an institution.
- Most (55%) found out about the boarding house from a social worker.

Once again, these results question traditional presumptions that the women may be going from boarding house to boarding house. However, as many women spoke of leaving boarding houses out of fear for their personal safety, this may imply they do not go on to another boarding house for safety reasons. What is significant here is that women were leaving their last place of residence for reasons beyond their control ie the shift to the boarding house was not viewed as a positive or proactive choice. Some women (who had previously lived in a boarding house) had moved from a flatting situation back to a boarding house because the boarding house was seen as a cheaper option. It is ironic that although most of the women were referred to their boarding house by a social worker, all the social workers interviewed for this study claimed that boarding houses were unsavoury places that neither they, nor their relatives (and in some cases, their dogs) would want to live in.

Reasons for moving into first boarding house

- Highest frequency was the shift from an institution (45%) although some had also been flatting or staying with friends.
- Of the remainder, most were moving in response to a negative situation.
- Only one person was leaving relationships or family.
- Over half found out about the boarding house from a social worker

These results indicate that there is very little difference between the reasons for moving to the first boarding house and the reasons for moving to subsequent boarding houses. Some of the negative reasons which lead to the shift ranged from the 'folding' of a flat, getting fed up with living in a caravan in a paddock with no running water, getting kicked out of a rehabilitation unit and getting away from a father's violent moods. As social workers are so clearly linked with the referral and recommendation of boarding houses it suggests that there is need for intervention at this level.

Room/Sharing/Price

- Majority lived in medium to large houses (6 - 30 rooms). Over a third were in places with more than 16 rooms. 90% lived in places with more than 6 rooms.
- More than half had shared their rooms with another female.
- All preferred a room of their own.
- Average rent was 55% of income.

The size of the houses the women are living in is significant. If, as Sole (1988) has indicated, men in boarding houses out-number women by 4 to 1, then the disparity will be particularly evident in the larger houses. This may contribute to a woman's sense of vulnerability. In all the cases where women have shared their rooms, it was because there were insufficient rooms in the house. This raises questions as to why a boarding house operator continues to take in residents after all the rooms are full. The average rent paid by the women is of obvious concern, particularly as all of the respondents are receiving an Income Support benefit. The rents ranged from 39% of income for a shared room, to 60% of income for a single room. This figure does not include meals. Two of the women's responses were excluded from this analysis. One of the women who had lived in a boarding house some time ago could not remember her rent. The other woman was in a long-stay hospital and had no control over her finances. She did not know the amount of her benefit, the cost of her accommodation or how much she was entitled to receive in 'pocket money'. It must be hoped that this woman has access to an advocate who can ensure she is receiving her entitlements.

Maintenance/Sense of security

- The majority of women (65%) considered their boarding house to be in a state of disrepair.
- The majority of complaints were about coldness and dirtiness. Also significant (at least 50%) were dampness; draughts; and odours.
- No woman had stayed in a boarding house that provided women-only bathrooms.
- More than half the women reported that there were no secure locks on the windows.
- A third reported that there were no secure locks on bedroom doors.
- Many women stated that others had keys to their rooms.
- More than half claimed the buildings had inadequate lighting.
- A large majority of the women (73%) claimed to feel unsafe in their boarding house. This lack of safety is both site specific and linked to resident behaviour.
- One person had been asked to sleep in a place that was not a bedroom.

The physical maintenance and appearance of the buildings is important to all the women. All the respondents had a complaint about the physical condition of their boarding house. Many acknowledged that boarding houses were not 'nice' places in which to live. This raises concerns about their levels of stress and self-esteem with regard to their living situation. It supports the suggestion raised by Kearns (1994) that the high rate of dwelling-related health problems amongst Auckland boarding house

residents (compared with those in Christchurch) might relate to a lack of adequate facilities in boarding houses in Auckland.

Of particular concern is the issue of keys. Some women spoke of the fact that when people left they did not return keys and the landlords did not change the locks. This left the women feeling frightened that the old occupant of the room would return. Many women spoke of people entering their rooms in their absence and stealing items. Others said that when they lost their own keys the landlord would not replace them and they were forced to leave their doors unlocked.

Lighting was also raised as an issue of concern. Landlords attempted to save electricity and would remove bulbs in hallways and stairways or turn them off at night. Landlords were seen to be always worrying about electricity usage, particularly by those who stayed in the house during the day. Women expressed fear about going to the toilet at nights.

Women's fear was overwhelmingly related to the shared areas - the bathrooms, the kitchen and the lounge. Women avoid these areas as much as possible. However, the necessity of using the bathrooms means that women express more fear in regard to this area. The sharing of the kitchen and its facilities frequently resulted in food being stolen from the fridges. This meant people either had to pay for a small fridge for their own room or had to make frequent trips to the shops for fresh food. People were reluctant to buy in bulk and put food in the freezer for fear it would be stolen.

* *I'm scared someone might be in the toilet when it's all dark when you go in.*

* *Men piss all over the toilet floors. Someone once ran around with a knife*

* *The toilet -men might come in. Men pee on the floor too.*

* *The lounge, because of drinking and fighting. I used to stay upstairs, particularly on benefit days.*

* *They yell out comments at people walking past - it's very nerve-racking going in and out.*

* *There was a big crack in my bedroom door that people could look through. The manager wouldn't fix it.*

* *Other occupants didn't make it feel safe. Also the shower - I used to keep getting out to make sure the door was locked.*

* *I stayed on the top floor with five men. I felt terrified the whole time. I stayed out all day until 11.30 pm so as not to be there.*

* *I'm scared in the kitchen that someone will get angry and throw hot water or something.*

The behaviour of other residents was frequently cited as a reason for feeling unsafe.

*   *A guy came home drunk. He knocked on another guy's door and beat him up for no reason whatsoever.*

* *It's a huge fire risk - people smoking and going to sleep.*

* *It's pretty frightening. Heaps of drugs, alcohol and prostitution. Lots of heroin.*

* *Some of the men can get really violent. I used to worry that the men would come in and do something.*

* *A transsexual came home - drugged - had four men in the hallway and then just slid down the wall.*

* *This guy used to go mad and just run round with a knife. We had to hide.*

The suggestion by both and Merves (1992) and Gordon & Riger (1980) that women adopt self protective behaviour was borne out in this study. Some of the women talked of staying in their rooms or avoiding the common areas. Others talked of constantly checking that the bathroom door was locked before and during taking a shower.

Management

• All boarding houses had a manager. In most cases this was not the owner.

• There were equal numbers of male and female managers.

• In a majority of cases the manager was not available after hours and was usually not resident on the property. There was a tendency for them to come and go at irregular intervals.

• The major function of the manager appeared to be allocating rooms and collecting rents. Less than a third of the women thought their manager would be able to deal with conflict or provide advice.

• 60% of the women considered their managers to be approachable.

• However, a majority (73%) felt unable to rely on this person in an emergency.

• Over half did not feel the manager would help them if they were harassed.

• Only one person preferred male managers over female managers. Over half preferred female managers.

It is of major concern that the majority of women respondents felt unsupported in the face of emergency or harassment. There was no correlation between this lack of support and the sex of the managers. Many of the women expressed a great deal of reluctance to report or complain of harassment. It was seen as both counter-

productive and as a negative personal trait. This supports Fuentes' and Miller's (1986) claim that fear and powerlessness prevent many victims reporting sexual harassment.

* *I never went to him. He wouldn't have done anything anyway.*
* *People there would hassle you and have you kicked out if you complained.*
* *He was nice but he was too young.*
* *I'm not a nark.*

Some women expressed concern about the amount of power a boarding house manager has over some of the residents - particularly those people with a mental health disability.

* *Staff are frequently goading or sarcastic. They always threaten to call the police and have me taken away.*
* *They use to speak disgustingly to us. They talk about our private lives to others and listen in on party-lines if we ring up someone to complain. They used to tell social welfare lies about me so that they'd think I was mad and not listen to my complaints.*
* *....let the men touch you all the time. When I complained I was told I was mad and that I had no rights.*

All but one of the women said they would change things if they were manager of the boarding house. This mainly related to tighter selection criteria and the maintenance of facilities. Nearly all the women claimed that 'problem people' were the biggest issue in boarding houses. They tended to think that life in boarding houses would be significantly different without them.

* *I'd have separate facilities for boys and girls. Two kitchens - one for each. And two lounges.*
* *I'd be more selective about who lives there. And have a balance of males and females.*
* *I'd choose more carefully the people who come in to live. No intimidation. No put-downs or bullying.*
* *I'd get rid of the drunks.*
* *I'd have less cruelty and humiliation of tenants.*
* *I'd make sure there are good locks on bedroom and bathroom doors.*

Preference for mixed/women only boarding houses

- No respondents lived in a women only boarding house.
- A majority did not know of any women only places in Auckland
- All knew of places that do not accept women.
- All except one thought there should be women only places.
- Most (73%) thought a women-only boarding house would be safer.
- Half the women had been turned away from a boarding house because of their sex.

This result indicates a need for more places in Auckland that accept women or which are women-only. There were a variety of explanations as to why boarding house managers are reluctant to accept women. However, most women were unable to explain this phenomenon. The responses appear to suggest that manager's excuses for not accepting women are polarised between those who think women are too bad and those who think women are too good.

*   *Older men often don't want women or couples fighting.*

*   *They think women are more difficult to handle. They worry that women may bring men home. Men do what they're told.*

*   *They think it's not suitable for women. They don't want to have to worry about a woman getting attacked so they cover their backs.*

*   *Landlords think women are more fussy.*

*   *Women avoid them more than men because they feel unsafe.*

*   *Men are easier. They don't complain. Women expect a certain standard of living. Men accept being treated like animals. Women keep fighting for better conditions whereas men give up.*

The women offered a variety of reasons as to why they would prefer a women-only boarding house. The majority were largely concerned with issues of personal safety.

*   *Less abuse. Less violence. More empathy. Less threatening. Cleaner, Hygiene.*

*   *Women living together have a better chance of helping each other especially if they have children. Women help each other out. Men don't understand what women go through getting by in the world.*

*   *Women need to have a place without the threat of guys. Not just sexual, but aggressive harassment.*

*   *Sexual harassment. Sexist remarks.*

*   *Safer eg going to bathroom in your dressing gown.*

*   *Because people don't go into them unless they're helpless. It's a place of protection for a wee while.*

Many women acknowledged the difficulty of conducting a relationship in a boarding house. It is usually not permitted to have people stay the night. It was suggested by Bethne Smith from the Homeless Team that this could encourage women to move out of the boarding house into relationships (or have a partner move in with them) before they might otherwise choose to do so.

Experiences of Violence/Sexual Harassment

- All the women except one had experienced at least one of the activities on the showcard (see overleaf).
- However, on average, each woman had experienced four of the activities.
- A majority (82%) had experienced sexual harassment and (65%) had been pressured for sex.
- Over half had been threatened with violence
- Over half had experienced inappropriate touching.
- Two had been raped.
- Only 2 (the rape victims) had complained - one to police and one to a social worker.
- Over half had left a boarding house at some time because they felt afraid.
- Over half have contacted a woman's refuge at some stage in their lives.
- Nearly all the women claim to personally know other women who had experienced the activities on Card G (see overleaf).

These results make it clearly evident that women living in boarding houses are subjected to behaviour that makes them fearful for their personal safety. This behaviour is largely being perpetrated by other residents in the boarding house (although managers are cited as perpetrators in all categories except one). Although no women claimed to have been pressured for sex by a manager, one rape was committed by a manager. Managers are largely guilty of making comments about the women's bodies. Visitors (ie other resident's visitors) are also a problem, particularly in pressuring women for sex.

CARD G

A. **Rude Comments Made to You About Your Body**

B. **Rude Comments Made to Others About You Within Your Hearing Distance**

C. **Staring at Your Body in a Way That Makes You Uncomfortable**

D. **Slapping/Hitting**

E. **Beating**

F. **Threats of Violence**

G. **Pressure for Sex**

H. **Inappropriate Touching**

I. **Sexual Assault or Rape**

All respondents except one reported having experienced sexual harassment. Many had felt threatened or changed their behaviour so as not to be 'hassled'. Most expected to be hassled and assumed it as a fact of life. At least a quarter reported serious assaults. All respondents knew of at least one other woman who had suffered a traumatic experience in a boarding house. Many women reported a general feeling of fearfulness of what might happen. All respondents complained about the filthy state of the toilets as somehow contributing to their fear.

The lack of reportage of these incidents is over-whelming. It stems from the belief that complaining is counter-productive and will only make trouble which will result in the women being evicted. Of the two reported rapes, only one (the one reported to police) was believed to be acted upon.

* *It's not worth it -it just makes trouble.*

* *You couldn't complain. You just had to put up with it. If you create a ruckus you get kicked out.*

* *I didn't want to make trouble - they would have made it worse.*

* *It wouldn't have done any good.*

* *You don't blab.*

* *They wouldn't have done anything anyway.*

* *It would only cause trouble.*

* *I didn't complain because I knew nothing would be done about it.*

* *I put up with them because I'd just get moved out if I complained.*

Feeling Safe and Secure

- All except one woman had stayed in places where they felt safe at some stage in their lives.
- The safe places were either in a flat; in the family home; or in their own home
- Only one woman reported feeling safe in a boarding house.
- The majority (73%) would prefer to be in a flat or their own home.
- The main barrier to achieving this was cost.
- The women had a wide range of images re their ideal home. However, the majority cited four main characteristics: their own bathroom; cleanliness; women-only; and aesthetics.

Many of the women had identified living in a flat and living in the family home as places of safety and security. This may suggest that issues of privacy, trust and support are essential elements missing in the boarding house situation. It is interesting to note that none of the women named an institution as a place where they had felt safe or secure. The woman who reported feeling safe in a boarding house said this was because she was physically able to defend herself.

The women were asked to describe their ideal boarding house. There were no limitations placed on the amount of imagination or fantasy they could bring into the descriptive process.

* *No one could dream of such a place. Own bathroom and toilet. Own washing and laundry facilities.*

* *Cheap, clean, safe.*

* *Single bedrooms with en suite. Smoking allowed. Masseurs and physiotherapists. Lots of money to spend.*

* *Own room with en suite, private courtyard, varied menu, transport available, women only, age appropriate. Plenty of hot water. Clean.*

* *It would have - umm- this is tricky. Ten rooms - 5 down and 5 up. A lounge and toilet upstairs and downstairs. Women only. Beautiful front garden and side gardens - roses - an archway with hanging roses. Plenty of space. Big back yard. Pets allowed - 2 cats.*

* *All female. Nice clean furnishings. Good laundry facilities. Pleasant person running it. Nice pretty colours - fresh. People mind their own business.*

* *Heated, well-tended to, carpet throughout, dishwasher, tv room, smoking room, billiard table, male and female toilets separate, adequate washing line space, cats allowed, fire sprinklers, no drugs.*

* *Run collectively or democratically. Mentors who could help cover financial costs. Networked with community group with support from central and local government and the RHA. Ratio of 2:1 well people to psych survivors. Selection would be based on how much they could commit to living in an effective community.*

* *Strict with troublemakers. No liquor or drugs. Clean and warm. Well managed. Managers there all day. Manager that keep people on their toes re keeping clean.*

* *Locks on doors. Coffee provided. Evening wine. Washing done. Meals cooked. Budgeting service.*

* *No violent patients; right care-givers that look at whole person; be able to get on with one another; decent meals; right to have pocket money; right to own files and lawyer; advocacy; telephones - own; care that you'd give your own family in your own home; pets eg a bird; locks on doors.*

Many women found it extremely difficult to imagine their ideal boarding house. This might support the findings of Tomas and Dittmar (1995) who found that for many homeless women the ability to distinguish between a house and a home was seriously impaired. It is alarming to note that most of what the women wish for are basic or essential services that should already be provided. Most women's ideal boarding house consists of clean toilets, a functioning laundry and adequate hot water. What they are fantasising about is a living situation that provides what might be considered a minimum standard. However, from within the range of responses it is possible to identify a pattern in which nine key factors regularly appear:

Own bathroom; Cleanliness; Democratic; Women-only; Pets; Aesthetics; Personal Safety; Sense of Community; Support.

Read together these factors can be seen to encompass four fundamental principles, each of which must be seen as instrumental in the formulation of a potent and efficacious housing policy. These four principles are:

Security	Autonomy	Advocacy	Belonging

Personal Statistics

- Nearly half the sample was aged over 45. There were no respondents aged under 19 or over 59. 27% were under age 30. 28% were under age 45 and 45% were aged over 45.
- All except one identified as pakeha or european.
- All were in receipt of an Income Support benefit. This was predominantly a Disability Benefit for a mental health problem.
- All the women were on some form of medication.
- Nearly half the women had children. This conforms with Crystal's 1984 study in which he found that 53% of all women studied had at least one child.
- One quarter were in part-time employment
- A quarter had owned their own homes (with a husband) at some prior stage.

Merves (1992) claim that women do not appear to fit into the disaffiliation model that assumes a lack of involvement in social or familial roles is also supported here. In this current research project, many of the women interviewed expressed a desire to form

relationships with other human beings and many overtly expressed desires to love and be loved.

- *The biggest violence of all was that I always felt unloved.*
- *Some women would like their boyfriends to stay occasionally.*
- *I would enjoy the combined strengths and energies of sistership*
- *It would be good to have things run collectively*

2. SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESPONSES

These interviews were conducted with individuals who are involved or connected with the welfare or administration of women who live in boarding houses. All were asked to give their general impressions of the predicament faced by women who live in boarding houses.

Janine Bowden - Community Constable - Ponsonby Area Office

Janine is adamant that boarding houses are merely a microcosm of what goes on in the rest of society. The only difference is that boarding houses throw a lot of strangers together under stressful conditions where poverty, alcohol and drug use are more concentrated. Janine's experience had mainly been with men being violent and causing trouble. She confirms that women's 'trouble' is often perceived by boarding house communities to be minor and the police don't get called out to attend to these types of incident. Petty theft is a major problem, as is domestic violence between couples. She thinks women alone in boarding houses need to exercise a lot of caution.

Janine describes boarding houses as depressing, smelly and dirty places. She finds them very sad. She considers a major source of the problems occurring in boarding houses stems from a lack of privacy and people having to share space.... *there are always arguments over territorial things - they start in the TV room...whose chair....what channel etc. There's a definite pecking order with lots of unwritten rules.....it's just like school.* The residents are seen to be lacking in basic problem solving techniques. Most have had something extremely negative happen in their lives. This negativity gets magnified with all of them living under one roof. *Families have shared values - if you don't get brought up in a family you don't get to learn and share values. These people are all of different backgrounds and religions - unlike a typical family situation.*

Janine thinks there is low reportage of boarding house incidents and that the police do not get called out to incidents to the same extent that they normally would. The police are frequently unable to press charges because they cannot get witnesses or victims to testify. Janine suggests that the dynamics in a boarding house parallel those in a prison - the residents like to sort out problems themselves .... *it's a stigma to call police - narking- other residents will make life impossible for you. Once again, it is like school. They all know that eventually they're going to have to resume living together. It's a small community in Auckland and they all know each other.*

Janine claims that the owner or manager is ultimately responsible for the behaviour of his/her tenants ....*whoever is in charge affects the behaviour of the whole house. The dynamics are all based around who is in the boarding house at the time. A good leader will have a good group.*

Problems Identified: Low reportage and need for good management.

June Kirk-Smith - Co- ordinator -Tenants Protection Association, Auckland

June claims to be familiar with problems of sexual harassment women are experiencing in boarding houses. She can recall at least nine formal complaints she has received from women living in boarding houses over the past four years. She thinks there have been more but she cannot recall them. For a variety of reasons the calls may not have been documented. However, this is mainly because boarding house residents are not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act.

Of the nine cases she can recall:

One was a complaint of persistent sexual harassment from the proprietor of a boarding house. The woman was a user of mental health services. She appeared to be unable to make her own decisions and was considered to be very vulnerable. June contacted the woman's mental health support worker. Neither June nor the support person contacted the police. However, arrangements were made to shift the woman to another boarding house. It is unclear if the proprietor of the boarding house was ever approached.

Three other cases were complaints of sexual harassment from other residents. Tenants Protection Association said they were unable to help. Although the proprietors were approached they either denied the activity was occurring or blamed it on the women.

Five other complaints related to the amount of rent being taken by the proprietor. These were referred to a lawyer.

June's impression of boarding houses is that they are........ *the pits. Full of fleas and cockroaches. Women would do anything rather than live in one.* There is very little accommodation she can recommend to the many single women who ring up wanting referrals to a 'nice cheap place'. June maintains there is a need for ......*good cheap,*

clean, single accommodation that is well managed. Possibly run by community groups - but not just mental health places.

Problems Identified: No protection under Act. Lack of potent advocacy. Need for affordable single accommodation.

Catherine Plunkett - Domestic Violence Centre, Auckland.

Catherine talked of being very familiar with calls from women in boarding houses. Although they do not record this information the workers at the centre estimate that they receive on average ten calls per month. Catherine spoke of her perception that most callers from boarding houses had a mental health problem. This posed difficulties for the centre. Firstly, refuge is primarily for women who are getting away from a violent partnership and who need to avoid being traced. Women with a mental health problem were considered to be more likely to violate the secrecy of the house. Secondly, the women are frequently seen to be too disruptive in refuges, needing a major amount of care and attention which the refuges are not adequately resourced to supply. Thirdly, Catherine claims that sometimes it is difficult to gauge whether the woman's experiences are occurring in a present reality.

Catherine considers that the problems in boarding houses have resulted, in the main, from the deinstitutionalisation of the mental health services in New Zealand. She describes several experiences of ringing mental health workers for women who have rung in distress. She says she has met with a range of responses ranging from rudeness or apathy through to despair and frustration at the lack of available or suitable accommodation. One woman rang the centre repeatedly, describing her experiences of sexual harassment in a boarding house. Catherine phoned the woman's mental health service and was told they would attend to the matter. The woman rang back a few days later to say she had been reprimanded for her calls and she was told not to ring the centre again. Her advocates had not investigated her complaints.

Outside of the mental health services, Catherine acknowledges a need for quality boarding houses for single women.

Problems identified: Need for protection. Need for advocacy. Refuges not the answer. Need to challenge the misconception that all women in boarding houses are 'mad' and/or disruptive.

Sue Schofield - Taylor Centre - Mental Health Services, Auckland.

Sue believes there is a group of women who choose not to go into the community houses administered under the mental health service regime. There are too many rules and they are frequently regimented, just like an institution with little opportunity for self-determination. Some people prefer to live a more autonomous lifestyle - to cook their own meals or to eat when they choose. Some want cheaper accommodation than that provided through the mental health services where they are only given a small amount of pocket money per week. *This is for life. It is not a situation that is likely to change for them. It is all they have to look forward to. No wonder they want some form of control.*

Problem Identified: Need for autonomy and decision-making

Jim Lynch - St James Centre, Auckland.

Jim says he wouldn't feel happy putting anyone into any of the boarding houses he knows. He is very aware of the lack of safety for women in boarding houses and believes women frequently form partnerships for protection. He thinks a lack of privacy intensifies existing problems. Jim is over-whelmed by the extreme loneliness and isolation experienced by many boarding house residents.

Problem Identified: Need for protection; need for privacy; need for community.

Bethne Smith - Homeless Team - Taylor Centre, Auckland.

Bethne describes boarding houses as unhealthy living environments, both emotionally and spiritually. She is aware that some house are renowned for being physically unsafe for women. A lack of privacy and insecure locks on bathroom doors are common problems. *One place I knew of had cubicles divided only by curtains. Two women paid $100 per cubicle. The landlord was renowned for forgoing rent for sex.*

Bethne is concerned about the number of women who seek liaisons with men in boarding houses. The relationship is often built on the need for protection or for

somewhere to stay. These relationships are often violent and/or break-down quickly and this creates more behavioural problems in the boarding house.

Problem Identified: Need for protection.

Lynley Hager - Accommodation worker- Methodist Mission, Auckland.

Lynley suggested reasons why boarding houses managers might be reluctant to take women. She suggested that men and women have traditionally learnt different ways of dealing with their stress. Men tend to internalise their distress and then express this in a violent episode. Women verbalise their distress more frequently but are less likely to 'blow'. Consequently they are seen to be always complaining and requiring more attention. Also, this is sometimes interpreted into a belief that women will never 'bury the hatchet', while men are more accepting or tolerant. Lynley also suggests that men's use of violence is a reason that marginalised men receive more attention than women. *People take men's violence seriously because you can get seriously hurt from it. It always gets immediate attention.* The consequence is that women's needs are seldom recognised as immediate or important.

Lynley thinks that the current boarding house situation can best be rectified through a partnership of government (eg Housing NZ or Social Welfare) and community agencies working together at the local level. She maintains that the best results have been achieved when the response has been *informal, ad hoc, bottom-up and using the resources that are there at the time. Community support for innovative housing solutions is essential.*

Problems Identified: Need for women-only or more women-accepting places; Need for Community support; need for inter-agency action and cooperation; need for innovative solutions.

Charlie Fenwick - Methodist Mission, Auckland.

The problems of safety for women in boarding houses are very familiar to Charlie. He knows of women being harassed by both managers and residents and he has heard of managers bartering with women for sex in return for cheaper rent. Fifty percent of the men Charlie sees have a psychiatric history compared with 70 -80 percent of women. The women he sees are likely to be at the very end of their resources. He thinks women are more likely to stay with their friends. *Women may be seen as bad by*

boarding house managers because they tend to get the worst women but a much broader range of men. Poverty, health and availability of houses are also seen to be key issues. Charlie identifies a break-down of what he calls the social covenant *people in boarding houses are being excluded more and more by society.*

Problems Identified: Need for protection; Need for adequate income; Need for choice in housing market; need to break down stereotypes and discriminating attitudes.

Helen Vickery - Manager, YWCA, Auckland.

Helen used to work for the Housing Corporation at the time when there were lots of boarding houses on Symonds St. She described boarding houses as the 'pits' where she would never send a relative or loved one. Many women from boarding houses would approach her for state houses because they were seen as both affordable and safe. Helen has always been aware of a lack of safety for women in boarding houses. Women used to tell her of being harassed, feeling generally unsafe and being uncomfortable at being one of only two or three women in a large male dominated boarding house. *There needs to be places where women can have a break from the world of men - where they can get protection from a male culture.*

Problem Identified: Need for protection

Mary Claire Bartlett- Co-ordinator Grey Lynn Women's Refuge; Ex-manager of 470 (a boarding house for gays, lesbians and transsexuals).

Mary Claire is concerned that mental disability and medication can combine to repress a woman's ability to speak out or protect herself. She knows of managers who take advantage of this. She confirms Janine Bowden's claim that most of the residents in boarding houses are severely lacking in social skills. This can lead to the reluctance of refuges to take in women from boarding houses ...... *they often upset the other women.*

Mary Claire believes the housing reforms have been a violation of peoples lives and have contributed to poverty and abuse. *They have removed people from their homes and created perpetual disenfranchisement and hopelessness.*

Mary Claire helped set up 470. *You work around the immediate needs of the people there - good housing policy should enable this. The only rules were no glue and no*

tricks. The others started seeing others doing well. This sometimes threatens them and they try to pull each other back - but equally, peer pressure can force others to change for the better. She sees personal safety as paramount in boarding houses and tries to get the residents to communicate their needs and worries and to report incidents of concern ...... *this no-narking code is bullshit which keeps people quiet. It is not working for the people involved - it works against them.*

Problem Identified: Need for protection; Need for adequate housing; Need for support and advocacy.

Mohi Barrett - Consumer Support - Psychiatric Survivors, Auckland.

Mohi claims that many landlords are just out to get the large rents paid out to accommodation service providers by the RHA. He thinks they are not interested in the welfare of the residents and are often not fully aware of the range of behaviours associated with various mental disorders. He claims that the landlords frequently use emotional blackmail and manipulate resident's lack of information. *A woman wanted to move out of the community house and into a flat. She was paying $460 a week and he didn't want to lose the money. He told the woman that her medical team had said she was not allowed to move. Meanwhile he kept telling them that she was troublesome and not taking her medication etc. The landlords know a lot about the person's mental health, their police records and controls the medication. They have a lot of power and they frequently use it to emotionally or mentally abuse residents.*

Problem Identified: Need for support; need for advocacy; need for professional management and accountability.

3.   THE RESEARCH PROCESS - As a conscientising process

Mies (1983) has suggested that the research process must be a process of conscientisation. Wilkinson (1986) claims that research is an intersubjective process wherein the researcher's thoughts and feelings form part of the collaborative process. This section attempts to build on the knowledge and information collected thus far by describing the researcher's subjective experience of conducting the research.

In my approaches to local government organisations (Housing; Social Welfare; Health and Local Authorities) I became quickly aware of a low level of awareness of boarding house issues and a general sense of indifference towards the research topic. Many people I spoke to thought it was a non-issue, not a priority for research or resourcing. Others thought it was solely a mental health issue. Many claimed that the demise of the boarding house in Auckland would eradicate the problem. It became clear that the very real and substantial plight of the women was significantly obscured - even in the minds of those organisations supposedly tuned to human welfare. There was a general inability to recognise the implications for all women who live in communal or shared housing. Neither could they perceive the structural connections between a growing population of single women and their need to access affordable accommodation.

I also experienced a great deal of difficulty accessing interviews with people from government agencies. Generally my calls were never returned or I was fobbed off. Some people appeared to be in meetings everyday for months on end. Others made appointments to see me and then didn't turn up. Despite my claim that my work was supported by key community organisations in Auckland, I was made to feel like a nuisance in the lives of very important people. Their concern with maintaining their own bureaucratic treadmill of meetings and administration obscured any concern they might have for the plight of the individuals for whom they were ultimately responsible. This was a frustrating, time-wasting and demoralising process.

By comparison my approaches to community groups working with marginalised women were immediately welcomed. They confirmed their familiarity with the lack of protection for women in boarding houses and supported any move to investigate or ameliorate the situation[50] . Everyone I spoke to made time to see me even though they

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[50] Although one mission would not put me in contact with boarding-house residents, claiming the need for privacy and protection from outside or institutionalised inquisition, time was still made to talk these issues through with me. The concern and essential morality expressed in this standpoint (although frustrating my immediate efforts) was one I could respect.

were all frantically busy. When I went to see them they were usually running around tending to a million problems at once - finding food for someone, ringing social welfare for another, locating a bed for the night for someone else or trying to locate someone who had been seriously assaulted the night before. I stood in never-ending queues with people in need of immediate and urgent assistance - and still I was seen. I was overwhelmed by the energy and good work done by groups like the city Missions, Take-a-Break and Psychiatric Survivors - all on such meagre resources. It is they who everyday must deal with the consequences of people's ruptured lives, and it is they who must constantly struggle with the ethical and moral considerations of doing so. Everyday they bang their heads against the brick wall of welfare policies that are inadequate and paternalistic. At times they must undergo the frustration of standing back and not intervening. Their aim is to empower the individual and to engender a sense of personal autonomy - not to dictate who should get what support. They understand that empowerment cannot be bestowed from above. Although they assist the individual in the decision-making process, they do not act for the individual. Hence the flow of power starts from the bottom at the level of the individual and then webs out into personal relationships and communities.

Throughout the research process I have been aware that my lack of familiarity with the culture and lifestyles of disadvantaged women has severely affected the process and ultimate productivity of this project. Much of my year has been spent on learning the 'basics' and putting myself in a position from which I could formulate a valid research agenda. It is time which could have been more productively utilised in research and analysis. The superficiality of this research project masks and obscures some of the profound issues that a more informed approach may have elucidated. Rempel and Swanton (1994) write of the daily conflicts and compromises for women researching outside of their communities - *two white, middle-class feminists deciding to evaluate a community of which they did not belong tended to betray a trust as well as to flatten a rich and powerful experience.* It confirms my belief that community research should, wherever possible, be conducted from within that community. The staff at Take-a-Break have developed a rapport and trust with women who live in boarding houses and they have developed a considerable body of knowledge and understanding of the issues Working together, the Take-a-Break staff and visitors could have conducted a research process with far more depth, scope and credibility than that created here. Unfortunately, a lack of resources (time, staff and money) prevents community organisations conducting their own research. Inevitably, government policy falls short

of meeting its aims and obligations because it is typically based on research, such as this, which is conducted from outside the community of interest.

My cultural distance from the boarding house community adversely impacted on my attempts to obtain a sample Not only had I not established any credibility in their eyes but they tended toward a mistrust of academia and its ability to empathise or accurately represent their community. Many could not see the value to them personally of participation. Sprague (1991) had this to say about people who have been homeless - *the profound experience of loss may have caused both personal space and identities to be vulnerable, even threatened by others who are trying to help*. Many women indicated their willingness to participate but it was difficult to get them to confirm a date or time for the interviews. I was largely reliant on Take-a-Break workers ringing me and saying " ..... is here now and indicating her willingness to be interviewed." I would have to drop everything I was doing and come straight away. Any attempt by me to negotiate an alternative time with the interviewee was met with distrust and anger. I thought that perhaps the women felt it was the only bit of power they might have over the process.

Of particular concern is the apparent lack of representation of maori women within the research sample. Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests that maori women form a significant proportion of the boarding house population. It appears that for a variety of reasons, maori women at Take-a-Break did not feel comfortable participating in this research project. Once again, it might be suggested that the white, academic process introduced from outside their support community was not conducive to encouraging participation from maori women. Yet my observations are that maori women appear to be the most neglected and vulnerable group of women living in the Auckland boarding houses. It is imperative that further research be undertaken in this regard. In particular, further exploration is required into how the processes of rangitiratanga and honourable kawanatanga, as espoused in the Treaty of Waitangi, can be employed - both within the research process and within the structuring and resourcing of community groups. For this to happen community-based groups will need to seek further clarification from appropriate structures about the decision-making processes that affect them. This should include an analysis of how research is prioritised, resourced, staffed and undertaken. In terms of rangatiratanga and kawanatanga it needs to make clear who controls the research study, who will benefit from the research study and the processes for consultation that need to be undertaken.

In the end I must acknowledge the strong likelihood that my sample does not capture the women most in need of protection in boarding houses. This research has accessed the women that have managed to clamber out of the hopelessness of their situation and who have managed to access satisfactory accommodation. It has captured those women who are better able than others to support or protect themselves. This is possibly because they were contacted through a support agency. It is likely that I have represented the women most able to articulate their situation. This echoes the substantial research done by Diblin (1991) on young women and homelessness. She describes them as the lucky ones...... *However, the scant evidence that does exist suggests that large numbers of young women do not find anyone to help them and continue to be homeless.* The women having the most difficult time in boarding houses did not take part in this study for a variety of reasons. They were there and their stories were rumoured and well-known - they just do not feel able or willing to partake in research projects. This fact emphasises the importance of conducting research from inside the community of inquiry. This is not to suggest that research 'from within' is not free from issues of exploitation. It must also be acknowledged that the 'inside' researcher can also be the one who controls the group's resources. This may eventually be even more disempowering for the subjects than studies conducted by the 'outside' researcher who at least walks away at the end of the project.

I was, at times, overwhelmed by the abuses some of the women had suffered and the misfortunes that had befallen them. They were distressing incidents that had seemingly acted like dominoes, bringing disaster after disaster crashing down on their lives. I am mindful of the number of times I was asked "You do believe me don't you?" as once more they laid bare the reality of their existence. Their pleas are a reminder that they had not been silent, they had been talking but no one had listened, no one had acted. In some of the women the energy of frustration had been transformed into an inert form of hopelessness. Like racism and sexism there has operated an institutionalised hatred of the mentally disabled that has impacted at the individual and community level. It is the 'ism' that has no name in our society. The powerlessness these women have undergone (and still undergo) stems from our perceptions that mental ill-health naturally (and deservedly) goes hand in hand with powerlessness, abuse and neglect. Those with a mental disability suffer from stereotypes that reduce them to a single image or a behaviour that obscures their diversity and similarity with the population at large. The effect is a constant chipping away of their personhood and autonomy. It seems that a precondition for social justice is the removal of artificial barriers that divide the 'norm' and the 'deviant' in this society.

I was constantly impressed at how well these women managed their lives despite the immense barriers that some had faced. They were, in the main, resourceful and creative - aware of the dynamics that shaped their lives. Most possessed a considerable knowledge of the politics and policies that shaped their lives. They spoke with familiarity of the various welfare ministries and portfolios.

In the end analysis I must acknowledge that this has been a conscientising process for the researcher. But I am reluctant to attempt to gauge the likely benefits for the community that have contributed to this process - my fear is that the result will not be substantial. University researchers must remain aware of at whose expense they update their collections of knowledge. An exercise that takes from one community at the expense of another is essentially and fundamentally an exploitative one.

Chapter Ten

Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore the operatives of safety and security in the lives of women who live in boarding houses. It seeks to identify the physical, emotional and sexual vulnerability that women experience in relation to their accommodation. It endeavours to define the level of disempowerment these women experience as a result of their housing environment. It attempts to put in place research and analysis that will go someway to rectifying the imbalance in the literature of women's homelessness in relation to male homelessness.

Part One - Gender Issues

This thesis suggests that the social construction of gender roles serves to dictate appropriate roles for men and for women. It is through these constructs that women have become sexually objectified and domestified. Societal expectations about appropriate roles and behaviour for women impacts on women in the form of constraints. These constraints make it difficult for women to make positive, healthy lifestyle choices. The consequences for women who spurn their designated role are even more negative. Their ability to access essential resources is reduced. They become vulnerable to issues of poverty - their personal safety is compromised.

The gendering of the built environment has lead to a perceptible split in the way men's and women's traditional roles and activities are spatially organised. Within this paradigm the city is divided into domestic and productive spaces. Women are positioned as isolated and passive in the private, domestic sphere of the suburbs. In contrast, men are positioned as active and dominant in the public, productive sphere of the city. Such polarisation has created difficulties for women to make choices between domestic and productive activities.

The creation of gender roles and the construction of a spatial divide has contributed to the feminisation of poverty. Limited opportunities in paid labour are directly related to women's association with the home. Limited housing alternatives outside of the nuclear family construct makes it particularly difficult for women to access alternative forms of accommodation. A significant lack of accommodation for single women

stems from the perception that they are merely in transition between dependence on parents and dependence on a husband. The state remains fixated upon the needs of the nuclear family despite the significant rate of growth of female-headed households.

The construction of gender roles and the sexual objectification of women's bodies maintains their vulnerability to abuse, neglect, harassment and exploitation. It forces women to adopt protective behaviour and to be constantly vigilant. It limits their life choices and restricts their use of the public realm. Women who are homeless are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Homeless women in New Zealand are essentially invisible Although homeless research now includes both males and females, the data is seldom analysed along these variables. Homeless women are frequently hidden in stereotypes that reduce them to images of witches, whores or waifs. Hence they remain hidden in the images of improper womanhood that masks the reality of their physical and economic plight.

The term 'madness' has often been applied to women who behave irrationally or fail to follow the dictates of social order. Women's madness operates as a repository of myth and is maintained by misogyny. The demands and constraints of conforming to their prescribed role creates pressures that are very difficult to contain. When these are combined with poverty or abuse, it becomes difficult for women to maintain their mental health.

Part Two - Structural Issues

We should not allow a market driven society to leave those who are least able to afford it to find their own place to call home (Kearns, 1992)

The restructuring of New Zealand's welfare system included the privatisation of the state's housing provider and the embracing of a commercial objective. This market approach has been widely criticised for addressing demand issues without adequately taking into account issues of supply. Many areas of New Zealand are experiencing serious housing shortage. In particular Auckland has been observed as having major concentrations of people with serious housing need. The shift to a neo-classical economic policy has not resulted in the production of safe and affordable housing at the bottom end of the market. Women find it difficult to access adequate boarding house accommodation. The market has not created a supply that caters to their predicament. The increase in people at the lowest end of the market results in a

reduction in choices for women or forces them to put up with undesirable circumstances.

New Zealand's housing market is largely oriented towards the traditional nuclear family, despite the significant increase in women-headed households. It is these households, headed by women, that feature significantly in all indicators of poverty in New Zealand. Poor housing causes or contributes to ill health. This can diminish an individuals earning power which in turn will worsen her situation in the housing market.

Gentrification of the inner city suburbs of Auckland have lead to the demise of the boarding house. The houses that remain can be seen to be in substandard condition and the people who manage them are not subject to operational guidelines. Many of the residents have some level of mental health disability and may be considered to be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation. However, the protection given to all tenants in New Zealand under the Residential Tenancies Act does not extend to people who reside in boarding houses.

Part Three - The Research Study

The research component of this thesis aimed to answer seven fundamental questions. They lead to these final conclusions:

1) Are there particular incidents or dynamics that catalyse a woman's shift to a boarding house?

No specific causes can be ascribed to women's reasons for entering boarding house. The majority were either moving in response to a negative situation or leaving an institution. Moving into a boarding house does not appear to be a proactive or positive choice for many women - it may merely be the lesser of two evils or the only source of accommodation available to them.

2) What are the women's perceptions of the physical environment within the boarding house? What existing levels of maintenance and care do they find non/acceptable?

Most women are dissatisfied with the quality of their physical environment - most complaints concerned coldness and dirtiness. A significant majority of the women

expressed concern about site specific safety and security. In particular, a lack of lighting and unreliable systems for key return were cited.

3) How fearful are women for their safety within the boarding house?

The women expressed a great deal of fear in relation to the shared areas of the houses - bathrooms, toilets, kitchens and lounge areas. This fear related to the behaviour of other residents in the house - mainly males.

4) What are the women's individual experiences of violence or harassment within the boarding house?

The results make it clearly evident that women living in boarding houses have experienced violence within their living situation. They are also subjected to behaviour from both residents and managers that makes them fearful for their personal safety.

5) What levels of protection are available to them within the boarding house?

The majority of women felt extremely vulnerable in boarding houses. They felt that managers could provide them with no support or protection. Most felt unable to lodge a complaint.

6) What are the women's experiences of safety and security within their previous housing environments?

Many of the women identified living in a flat and living in the family home as places where they had previously experienced safety and security.

7) What are their needs/desires within the boarding house - what are the key areas where intervention could improve the quality of the housing experience?
The four fundamental issues emerging from this study are the need for:

Security	Autonomy	Advocacy	Belonging

A number of people from organisations that provide support to boarding house communities were interviewed. From these interviews it is possible to identify the following needs of women currently living in boarding houses in Auckland:

> **Need for increased reportage of crimes of violence in boarding houses**
>
> **Need for protection of boarding house tenants under Residential Tenancy Act**
>
> **Need for tenant advocacy for boarding house residents**
>
> **Need for women-only boarding houses**
>
> **Need for protection of women from violence and abuse in boarding houses**
>
> **Need for autonomy and self-determination by women in boarding houses**
>
> **Need for privacy by women in boarding houses**
>
> **Need for sense of family/community in boarding houses**
>
> **Need to break down stereotypes of boarding house residents**
>
> **Need for professional management of boarding houses**
>
> **Need for inter-agency co-operation**
>
> **Need for innovative and flexible solutions**
>
> **Need for choice in housing market**

Need for a community-based Response

It would be a mistake to focus exclusively on the issue of individual responsibility if that were to jeopardise the efficacy of society-wide interventions. A public health policy that eschews public interventions is one that runs the risk of putting too much emphasis on a 'blaming the victim' stance with respect to health and well-being in society at large- Kearns et al (1992)

A definition of what constitutes homelessness has recently been extrapolated into a notion of a continuum (Thorns, 1988; Watson, 1988; Kilgour, 1989). The continuum model enables a number of causes and correlatives to be examined at the same time. It suggests that housing environments cannot be polarised into housed or houseless and that many factors can interrelate to create a serious housing need. Such factors include affordability, tenure, maintenance, privacy, safety and genuine choice (Watson 1988). More recently it has also been suggested that homelessness is seldom a permanent state and that people will be at different stages or positions on the continuum at different stages or points of their lives. Such suggestions make it obvious that housing policy and intervention must be multifaceted. The heterogeneity of people with a diversity of needs which are potentially intermittent and changing means that targeting homelessness requires a robust, flexible and interweaving response.

Many of the people researching and describing homelessness agree that there is a need for more than just shelter - that any response must be multi-dimensional. Homelessness, they say, is a complex multi-determined phenomenon and any response

must encompass this web - cultural; institutional; community; organisational; group; and individual (Wekerle, 1980; Morse, 1992). Leavitt (1992) maintains the need for a link between local community development agencies and local housing authorities in an effort to widen the range of support - *Homelessness can be the catalyst for revising the idea of a unified shelter and services package in a setting where social services and community facilities are easily accessible.* She asserts that a moral response is one that concretises rather than abstracts, that links the individual to the collective and the physical to the social. Kearns (1994) has also identified that *providing shelter for the poor is a necessary but not sufficient solution to the existential condition of homelessness.* He argues that housing solutions must provide the individual with a sense of belonging and a connection to place. This sense of belonging to community as an essential component of adequate housing and the need to intervene at the community level was made imperative by Leavitt and Saegert (1990) who stated that *...... perhaps the most important thing we learnt from our research was that the fate of individuals was inseparable from that of the groups they belong to. .*

It can be a daunting task for community groups attempting to become involved in housing provision and management. It is particularly difficult to obtain funds at a time when both central and local government are providing minimal funds for subsidised housing. Apart from major financing concerns, community groups must find answers to perennial problems of acquiring buildings, developing management skills, over-coming community resistance, and establishing ongoing commitment and support from the public sector. In speaking of these problems, Fox (1985) asks - *Who will undertake the numerous tasks and responsibilities for sponsoring and operating these programmes? Who will monitor and evaluate them when they are undertaken and become operational? What kind of funds and human resources are needed?.* Fox is also concerned about the abuses that might arise if the provision of community housing is opened up to anyone who wants to get involved. Partners in boarding houses need extensive training, adequate funding and careful supervision. Non-profit groups are particularly needy in that they rely so much on volunteers and Fox suggests that they should not get involved unless they have support. There is emerging a need for a link between local community development agencies and local housing authorities to develop a community housing model. Such a model would provide for safe, secure and affordable shelter; nurturing social relationships; control over daily life and access to a familiar supportive community. It could build on the processes already put in place by the Regional Health Authority for the assessment and monitoring of boarding houses that operate under their umbrella.

In an age of individualism, the collective has lost meaning in our ethical lexicon. Sharing, mutuality and responsibility for others are lost in a repertoire of user-pays initiatives, economic efficiencies and the new 'managerialism' philosophies. In an age where corporate giants are talking 'emotional intelligence', it is difficult not to clamber aboard the gravy-train of self-obsession. Hucker (1988) draws on the work of ethicist and theologian, Reinhardt Niebuhr, to formulate five ethical criteria against which social policy can be assessed. They are repeated here because it is considered that any measurement of an equitable housing policy must be firmly rooted in an ethical analysis.

1. *Does the social policy take material well-being itself seriously as a basis for human fulfilment?*

2. *Is it committed to encouraging human interdependence as an expression of a common humanity, and does it contribute to the social undergirding of mutual love in the life of the community?*

3. *Does it express a belief in the intrinsic value of the individual as a person and is it committed to individual freedom, development and expression?*

4. *Does it consider human beings to be equal in a sense that is more basic than any inequalities, and does this guide the formulation of its objectives and content?*

5. *Does it take the universality of self-interest seriously, especially in areas of collective behaviour, and does it make realistic provision for its effects?*

Community housing partnerships go someway to rectifying the institutional failure to provide for social justice. They are a forum for dialogue and collaboration through which we can start to construct housing models based on trust and mutuality. The end analysis is not so much about counting how many people are housed, but about analysing how adequately they are housed. It is also about auditing who benefits from existing housing policy and at what cost. In identifying the structural connections between boarding houses and the need for women to access safe, affordable accommodation, we endeavour to remedy the situation of those who are currently powerlessness in the face of poverty, abuse and neglect. In the end analysis, a measurement of social justice for boarding house accommodation is quite simplistic. We do not need to turn to the profundity of the great ethicists, nor do we need to look to the deconstructions of the latter day discourse theorists. The answer is inherent in the words of Sheryl White, boarding house resident and mental health consumer representative to a recent housing conference - *if you wouldn't live there - then why should we?*

Chapter Eleven

Recommendations

A combination of federal leadership and money together with local energy, commitment and creativity are needed (Merves, 1992).

1.   Established Needs

This thesis has found that women in boarding houses have essential needs that are currently not being met. These are:

> **Need for protection of women from violence and abuse in boarding houses**
> **Need for increased reportage of crimes of violence in boarding houses**
> **Need for protection of boarding house tenants under Residential Tenancy Act**
> **Need for tenant advocacy for boarding house residents**
> **Need for women-only boarding houses**
> **Need for autonomy and self-determination by women in boarding houses**
> **Need for privacy by women in boarding houses**
> **Need for sense of family/community in boarding houses**
> **Need to break down stereotypes of boarding house residents**
> **Need for professional management of boarding houses**
> **Need for inter-agency co-operation**
> **Need for innovative and flexible solutions**
> **Need for choice in housing market**

In meeting these requirements, there is a need for policy development at four fundamental levels:

- Female homelessness
- Legislation
- Research
- Boarding house management

What is needed is a pluralistic response which incorporates a variety of groups and which attempts to build on the resources that are currently available in the community.

A significant issue that emerges is the need to put in place guidelines for the operation of boarding houses that simultaneously provide for safety and security without creating overly regimented households.

Any proposed response should create opportunities and mechanisms that enable women who choose to live in boarding houses to become involved in developing their own community housing structures. These mechanisms need to be sufficiently flexible to incorporate and encourage innovative, diverse responses.

2.   Key Recommendations

- Establish an independent inquiry into female homelessness.

- Encourage the development of women-only boarding houses.

- Amend Residential Tenancies Act - Part 1 Clause 5 Section (k) to include rights to protection under the Act for people living in boarding house accommodation.

- Encourage the analysis of women's issues, particularly those of safety and vulnerability within boarding houses and community houses, in ongoing housing research and housing needs assessments.

- Encourage the analysis of Maori women's issues of safety and vulnerability in boarding houses.

- Establishment of a boarding house working party to:
    (a) Set appropriate standards for the management and operation of boarding houses (including personal safety and security criteria).
    (b) Ascertain the current level of compliance
    (c) Investigate how the standards might be implemented
    (d) Develop national guidelines for boarding house operators and encourage registration with a national or regional body.
    (e) Develop a monitoring programme

3.   Linkages and Partnerships

The delivery of adequate boarding house accommodation within New Zealand will involve collaboration between local and central government, community agencies and voluntary organisations. Their key functions could be structured as follows:

Central Government	Policy Formulation
	Initiate Funding
	Research
	Monitoring
Local Authority	Develop Strategic Mechanisms
	Funding Allocation
	Assisting Partnerships and Liaison
	Monitoring Outcomes
Community Organisations and Voluntary Groups	Partnerships
	Management
	Support
	Advocacy

Successful collaborations between central government, local government and community organisations are not unknown in New Zealand. Previous examples include:

The Christchurch Nightshelter for Women (estab 1986). A collaboration between the management committee; YWCA; Dept Labour; and Christchurch City Council.

The Housing for Women Trust (estab. 1988). A collaboration between the Trust; Ministry of Women's Affairs; Christchurch City Council; Trustbank Canterbury; and a private sponsor

The Wellington Women's Boarding House (estab. 1992). A collaboration between the management group; YWCA; City Mission; Wellington Social Services Council; and the Housing Corporation.

4. A partnership model for community housing

A model for the development of partnerships and co-operation for the development of boarding houses in New Zealand might take the following form:

Community Organisation	Manages the boarding house
Peoples Centre/Neighbourhood Law Office/Tenancy Services	Provide advocacy and assistance with drawing up partnership contracts.
Community Centre/Polytech	Provide management training.
Ministries Housing and Health	Initiate funding, seeding grants and special purpose grants directly to community group. Low interest loans to local authority for acquisition of stocks.
Local Authority	Acquire stocks. Provide technical assistance. Physical monitoring. Strategic planning. Loans funds. Guarantees bank loans.
Community Board	Allocates and distributes resources.
Local Independent Housing Group	Registration of managers. Service monitoring. Policy reports.
Local Iwi or Te Puni Kokiri authorised group (to be established via consultation)	Represent and advocate for the needs of Maori.

(Private individuals are still able to run boarding houses within this model. Although they would be independent of any partnership arrangements they would now be required to display certified management skills and be subject to a service monitoring programme).

Appendix

Q1. **Do you live in a boarding house in Auckland?**
Yes ( ) Go to Q3   No ( )

Q2. **Have you ever lived in a boarding house in Auckland?**
Yes ( ) Go to Q5   No ( )

Q3. **Approximately how long have you lived there?**
( ) Less than 1 week   ( ) 1 - 4 Weeks   ( ) 1 - 6 Months
( ) 6 Months - 1 Year   ( ) 1 - 3 Years ( ) More than 3 years

Q4. **Have you ever lived in any other boarding house in Auckland?**
Yes ( )   No ( )

Q5. **Approximately how many other boarding houses in Auckland have you stayed in?**
( ) 3 or less   ( ) 6 or less   ( ) 12 or less   ( ) 13 or more

Q6. **How much time overall (approximately) have you spent living in boarding houses in Auckland?**
( ) Less than 1 week   ( ) 1 - 4 Weeks   ( ) 1 - 6 Months
( ) 6 Months - 2 Years   ( ) 2 - 5 Years   ( ) More than 5 years

Q7. **What is the shortest length of time you have stayed in any one boarding house?**
( ) Less than 1 week   ( ) Less than 1 month   ( ) Less than 3 months
( ) Less than six mths   ( ) Less than 1 year   ( ) Other.........................

Q8. **What is the longest length of time you have stayed in any one boarding house?**
( ) More than 1 week   ( ) More than 1 month   ( ) More than 3 months
( ) More than 6 months   ( ) More than 1 year   ( ) Other.........................

Nb From this point on the words 'current boarding house' are also used to refer to the 'last boarding house' a respondent who is no longer residing in a boarding house has lived in.

Q9. **Please look at Card A and select the type of accommodation that best describes where you were living immediately prior to coming to your current boarding house.**
( )A ( )B ( ) C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H ( )I ( )J ( )K ( )L

Q10. Please look at Card B and select those groups of people that best describe who you were living with immediately prior to coming to live in your current boarding house. You may choose more than one group.
( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H ( )I

Q11. Please look at Card C and select the item or items that best describes how you found out about the boarding house you currently live in.
( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H ( )I

Q12. Please look at Card D and select the item or items that best describe your reasons for moving out of the place you were living in immediately prior to coming to your current boarding house.
( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H ( )I ....

This section asks you questions about the first boarding house you ever stayed in.

Q13. Can you remember the first time you moved to a boarding house?
( ) Yes   ( ) No - go to question 17

Q14. Please look at Card A and select the type of accommodation that best describes where you were living immediately prior to moving into your first boarding house.
( )A (B ( )C ( )D ( )E (F ( )G ( )H ( )I ( )J ( )K ( )L

Q15. Please look at Card B and select those groups of people that best describe who you were living with immediately prior to moving into your first boarding house. You may choose more than one group.
( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F( )G ( )H ( )I

Q16. Please look at Card C and select the item or items that best describe how you found out about the first boarding house you lived in.
( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H ( )I

Q17. Please look at Card D and select the item or items that best describe your reasons for moving out of the place you were living in immediately prior to moving into your first boarding house.
( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H ( )I

This section asks you about your room in the boarding house - whether you share this space with anybody else and if you would prefer a room of your own.

Q18. How many bedrooms are there in your boarding house?..........................

Q19. Do you share your bedroom with another person?
( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q20. **Which do you prefer:**
( ) To share a room   ( ) A room of you own   ( ) Don't mind

Q21. **What things, if any, prevent you from having a room of your own?**
( ) Cost   ( ) Not many single rooms available ( ) Other...................
....

Q22. **Would you mind telling me how much rent you pay each week for your room?** $...............

Q23. **Would you mind telling me how much income you receive each week?**
$.......................

The physical maintenance of a boarding house can sometimes affect whether we feel safe or unsafe in certain situations. This section asks you to describe some of the physical aspects of your boarding house and how safe or unsafe these make you feel.

Q24. **Is the physical maintenance and appearance of the building important to you?**
( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q25. **Would you describe your boarding house as rundown or in a state of disrepair?**
( ) Yes   ( ) No - go to question 27

Q26. **Would you please look at Card E and select the item or items that describe your boarding house?**
( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H ( )I ( )J ( )K
....

Q27. **Are there women only bathrooms in your boarding house?**
( ) Yes ( ) No

Q28. **Are there secure locks on the:**

Windows	( ) Yes	( ) No
Bathroom doors	( ) Yes	( ) No
Toilet doors	( ) Yes	( ) No
Bedroom doors	( ) Yes	( ) No

Q29. **Are there places in your boarding house (eg rooms, corridors, bathrooms etc) that are not adequately lit at night?**   ( ) Yes   ( ) No
If so would you please describe these places?
....
....
....

Q30. Have you ever been asked by a boarding house manager or owner to sleep in a place or room that was not a bedroom? ( ) Yes ( ) No
If so would you please describe this place or places?

....
....
....

Q31. Have you ever been asked by a boarding house manager or owner to share a sleeping space (eg a bedroom or dormitory) in a boarding house -

- with a female/s ( ) Yes ( ) No
- with a male/s? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q32. Do you generally feel safe in your boarding house? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q33. Are there specific areas or places in your boarding house where you feel scared or nervous?
( ) Yes ( ) No

Q34. If so would you please describe why these places make you feel scared or nervous?

....
....
....

Most boarding houses have a manager or owners who are in charge. This section asks you questions about the management of your boarding house. It also asks you to think about any changes you would like to make to boarding house management.

Q35. Does you boarding house have a manager? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q36. Is this person also the owner of the boarding house? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q37. Is this person - ( ) Male ( ) Female

Q38. What times is this person 'on duty' or generally available to the residents?
( ) 24 hours ( ) Daytime and early evening ( ) Daytime ( ) Never
( ) Other ....

Q39. Please look at Card F and select the item or items that best describe the functions that your boarding house manager performs?
( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H

Q40. Do you find this person generally approachable and helpful when you need them? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q41. Do you feel you could rely on this person to help you in an emergency?
( ) Yes ( ) No

Q42. Do you think this person would help you if you were being annoyed or harassed by someone? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q43. Would you prefer to stay in a boarding house run by: ( ) Male managers ( ) Female managers ( ) Don't mind ( ) Don't know

Q44. If you were a boarding house manager are there any things that you would change? ( ) Yes ( ) No Please explain:

....

....

....

Many of the boarding houses in central Auckland are for both men and women. This section asks you if your house is 'mixed' or 'women-only'. It also asks you to talk a bit about whether you think 'women-only' places are a good or bad thing.

Q45. Is your boarding house a women-only place? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q46. Do you know of any women-only boarding houses in Auckland? ( ) Yes - How many? .... ( ) No

Q47. Do you know of any boarding houses in Auckland that don't accept women? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q48. If you answered yes, why do you think this is?

....

....

....

Q49. Do you think there should be women-only houses? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q50. Would you please explain?

....

....

....

Q51. Have you ever been turned away from a boarding house because you are a woman? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Q52. We'll now have a look at Card G. It describes different types of unwanted contact, comments and abuse that some women say they have experienced from   men in boarding houses. Have any of these things happened to you in a boarding house?   ( ) Yes   ( ) No - go to question 59

Q53. Would you mind showing me which ones?
( ) A   ( ) B   ( ) C   ( ) D   ( ) E   ( ) F   ( ) G   ( ) H   ( ) I

Q54. Would you mind telling me which of the following categories best describes the person or persons who were responsible for each of these incidents?

Activity	Another Resident	Manager	Visitor	Your Partner
A				
B				
C				
D				
E				
F				
G				
H				
I				

Q55. Did you complain to anyone about the incident that most bothered you?
( ) Yes   ( ) No - go to 59

Q56. If so, who did you complain to?
( ) Manager ( ) Police   ( ) Social Worker   ( ) Community group
( ) Women's Refuge   ( ) Church Group   ( ) Other.......................

Q57. Did you receive any help?   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q58. Did this help or assistance put a stop to the activity? ( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q59. Do you know of any of these things happening to other women?
( ) Yes - Which ones........................... (Refer to Card G)
( ) No

Q60. Have you ever put up with any of the activities described on the card so that you wouldn't be evicted? ( ) Yes ( ) No - Go to Q62

Q61. Would you please indicate which ones?

....

Q62. Have you ever left a boarding house because you felt frightened or unsafe?
( ) Yes ( ) No - Go to Q65

Q63. Would you mind looking at Card G again and selecting any items that were reasons for your leaving that boarding house?

....

Q64. Where did you go to? Please select an item from Card A.

....

Q65. Have you ever contacted a women's refuge for assistance? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Nb   Does the respondent want to talk to anyone now about her experiences?
Does she need immediate or follow-up care and attention?

This section asks you to describe any places you have lived in where you have felt safe and secure. It also asks you to imagine and describe your ideal boarding house.

Q66. Have you ever stayed in a place where you felt very safe and secure?
( ) Yes ( ) No - go to question 68

Q67. Would you please look at Card A and select any of the places you have lived in where you felt safe and secure.

....

Q68. Are there any places described on Card A that you would rather live in than in your current boarding house?

....

Q69. Please look at Card H - what things (if any) might stop you from moving out of your boarding house into the place/s you prefer?

( )A ( )B ( )C ( )D ( )E ( )F ( )G ( )H................

Q70. If you were to imagine your ideal boarding house what would it be like?

....
....
....
....
.

Q71. **Would you please indicate which age-group you belong to:**

Under 19   20 - 30   31 -45   45 - 59   60+

Q72. **How do you describe your ethnic or racial identity?** ( ) Maori
( ) Pacific Islander   ( ) Pakeha   ( ) Asian   ( ) Indian
( ) European   ( ) Other...

Q73. **Do you receive a benefit?** ( ) Yes - which one?...............................( ) No

Q74. **Do you know how to contact a social worker or a community worker if you needed one?**   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q75. **Are you currently taking medication?**   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q76. **Do you have any children?**   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q77. **Are you in full-time employment?**   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q78. **Are you in part-time employment**   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

Q79. **Have you ever owned your own home?**   ( ) Yes   ( ) No

CARD A

A. Flat
B. Boarding House
C. Own Home
D. Family Home
E. Community House
F. Emergency Shelter
G. Women's Refuge
H. Institution eg Hospital
I. Staying with Friends
J. Shed/Garage
K. Motor Camp
L. Other

CARD B

A. Parent/s

B. Brother/Sister

C. Other Relations

D. Partner

E. Children

F. Friends

G. Strangers

H. Other Residents

I. Other

CARD C

A. Friend

B. Social Worker

C. Community/ Church Group

D. Housing New Zealand

E. Nightshelter

F. Women's Refuge

G. Accommodation Directory

H. Already knew of its Existence

I. Other

A. Couldn't Afford Rent/Mortgage

B. Didn't Like the People

C. Relationship Break-up

D. Violence or Fear of Violence

E. Move from Institution

F. Just Felt Like a Change

G. Request from Landlord

H. Boarding House Closed Down

I. Other

CARD E

A. Cold

B. Damp

C. Draughty

D. Dark/Dim

E. Holes or Gaps in Walls

F. Rats/Mice/Vermin

G. Leaky Roof or Windows

H. Broken Windows

I. Smelly

J. Dirty

K. Other

CARD F

A. Allocates Rooms

B. Collects the Rent

C. Cleaning

D. Prepares Meals

E. Deals with Conflicts

F. Answers general Enquires

G. Provides Advice and Support

H. Other

CARD G

A. **Rude Comments Made to You About Your Body**

B. **Rude Comments Made to Others About You Within Your Hearing Distance**

C. **Staring at Your Body in a Way That Makes You Uncomfortable**

D. **Slapping/Hitting**

E. **Beating**

F. **Threats of Violence**

G. **Pressure for Sex**

H. **Inappropriate Touching**

I. **Sexual Assault or Rape**

CARD H

A. Cost of Rent/Mortgage

B. Cost of Deposit for House

C. Cost of Bond and Rent in Advance

D. Can't Manage on my Own

E. Can't Find Any Available Places

F. Landlords Always Turn Me Down

G. Need Someone to Help Me Find a
    Place

H. Other

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