

WORKSHOP: GENDERED VIOLENCE - LINKING LOCAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

WORKSHOP COMMUNIQUE



GENDERED VIOLENCE – LINKING LOCAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES.

On Friday 27 October 2017 a group of around 30 academics, domestic violence support workers and men's behaviour change specialists met in Brisbane, Australia to consider the topic of 'gendered violence – linking local and global perspectives'. The aim of the workshop was to link up researchers with practitioners in the field and to build a network of Brisbane-based researchers engaged in research on violence against women. Sessions were facilitated by practitioners.

Recurring themes of the workshop included:

- The role of practitioners and the role of research– how we can work together to make research meaningful.
- Naming violence against women and defining its scope.
- Recognizing the diversity of victims of violence.
- The absence of women's voices in understanding and documenting abuse.
- Help-seeking: access to appropriate services and support both for women leaving violence and for men seeking to end their violence; the complexities of help-seeking and the potential of state systems to actually obstruct rather than enhance safety and growth; the need for creative approaches and changes to the system.
- Access to data and accountability in its collection.

Facilitated by Chantell Eastwell from [Women's House](#), 'Families and children' was the title of the first panel. [Rebecca Wallis](#) began the proceedings with an overview of her research involving interviews with women negotiating their maternal identities during terms of imprisonment. She showed how engaging with formal interventions sometimes created new problems for women. [Heron Loban](#) explored inquests into the deaths of two Indigenous women whose lives have been marred by violence. Heron identified that their voices were missing from the reported inquest and explained how she planned to write their voices back into the narrative of their lives and deaths. [Zoe Rathus](#) reported on her work with a team of researchers assessing how family violence is dealt with in family reports. When parents are unable to agree about post-separation parenting arrangements and commence legal proceedings, the most common expert evidence obtained is a 'family report'. Her research pointed to the invalidation of family violence by some report writers, questioned the accountability of report writers, and identified the need for mandatory training in the dynamics of family violence for report writers.

This panel was followed by [Sharon Cowan's](#) keynote. Drawing on a range of examples, Sharon demonstrated how law is not always the solution and how too much focus on it can lead to a kind of 'methodological blindness'. She also emphasised how the law in the UK can be employed in 'gender fraud' rape cases to contribute to discrimination against transgender people. This session was facilitated by Matilda Alexander from the [LGBTI legal Service Inc.](#)

A second panel titled 'Marriage' was facilitated by Ingrid Green from the [Immigrant Women's Support Service](#). In this panel [Ana Borges](#) and [Heather Douglas](#) focussed attention on migrant women on partner visas. When these relationships end because of domestic violence before permanent residency is granted, the partner on a visa may still be able to attain permanent residency if she can show two things under the migration rules: (1) a genuine relationship and (2) there was domestic violence. In separate presentations drawing on interviews with women who had navigated this system, Ana and Heather showed how women's experiences of their relationship and of domestic violence were sometimes difficult to fit within the Australian migration rules, and a need to review legal definitions to encompass women's real experiences. This compounded their vulnerability. [Melanie O'Brien](#) considered forced marriage as a gender-based crime in the context of armed conflicts and mass atrocities. Through examples she showed how it is often subsumed under crimes of sexual slavery. Her presentation demonstrated the need for a clear definition and development of a crime of forced marriage in the international context.

Panel three 'Working with Men' was facilitated by Paul Monsour from Services and Practitioners for the Elimination of Abuse Qld. [Silke Meyer](#) is evaluating the effectiveness of the Walking with Dads program, a response to fathers who perpetrate domestic and family violence and are known to Child Safety to determine the effect of the program in increasing perpetrators' understanding of the impact of their behaviour. A second project she is undertaking will evaluate another intervention program for fathers who use violence called the 'Caring Dads' program. [Elena Marchetti's](#) work is focused on Indigenous sentencing courts. These courts involve community input and a high degree of victim and offender participation. She explores how they provide an opportunity to recognise the marginalisation and disadvantage experienced by indigenous men, to address the consequences of the enduring impact of colonisation, and to offer the potential for an approach that seeks family healing as opposed to punitive sanctions. In this session [Michael Flood](#) questioned the role of masculinity in the context of violence against women and questioning the label 'gendered violence' emphasising the need to continue to focus attention on violence against women.

The final session, hosted by Angela Lynch from [Women's Legal Service](#) and titled 'Courts and Justice', included two presenters. [Kerstin Braun](#) emphasised that one of the aims of law reform has been to improve the experience of sexual assault victims in the criminal justice system and to increase the low reporting and correspondingly low conviction rates of sexually motivated crime. She recommended that sexual assault victims could be provided with the right to be legally represented by an independent private counsel at various stages of the proceedings, explaining how this could work within the adversarial justice process. [Olivera Simic](#) described how feminist transitional justice scholarship failed to recognise and represent all women victims, arguing that representations privilege particular ethnic and racial groups of women. She claimed that this has led to a lack of attention to certain groups of women victims.

The workshop was highly successful in its goal of bringing together researchers and practitioners. It enabled practitioners to discover what kind of research is being undertaken, and the development of a network between researchers and practitioners which will facilitate ongoing and future research into gendered violence. Research in this field has the potential to drive policy and legal change, and the input of empirical and lived experience from practitioners and those who use their services enables research to be conducted in a way that can be used to improve outcomes for victims of violence. Researcher-practitioner collaboration is important for producing research that can contribute to positive change. This workshop contributed to the development of a truly collaborative network.

Heather Douglas, Melanie O'Brien and Ana Borges.
20 November 2017

WORKSHOP ORGANISERS:

Professor Heather Douglas - h.douglas@law.uq.edu.au

Dr Melanie O'Brien - m.obrien@law.uq.edu.au

Ana Borges - a.borgesjelinic@uq.edu.au

law.uq.edu.au

This workshop was supported by a grant from the UQ Law School.