We are Family

Ways of Being Family in Aotearoa New Zealand

GOAL:

To have the ability to recognise different family patterns and how they work. To discern helpful and unhelpful responses in both self and church.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing this module, participants will be able to:

1. describe the different models of family that are now recognized in Aotearoa/New Zealand today.
   a. identify ways in which these models have changed during the last 20 years.
   b. describe some of the changed patterns of interaction within the family.
   c. name some of the external influences that have impact on families
   d. list ways that individuals and churches respond to the various models of family

2. demonstrate ways in which changes in families have influenced the patterns of interaction within and between families.
   a. explain how a variety of responses from the church or individuals affect families

3. take into account the different models and patterns of interaction within families, and evaluate their own and their churches ongoing response to young people and their families.

CONTENTS

What To Do

1   Describe your family using one of the methods below.
>   **Either**:
>   Describe your family, as it would be depicted on a t.v. soap like Coronation Street, or the Young and the Restless.
>   **Or:**
>   Use the material entitled Geneogram as described on page 5.
>   **Or:**
>   Use Step four of the Module on Pastoral Care, if you have already completed it.
>   **Or:**
>   Any other way you choose that offers the information

2   Write one paragraph on each of the following questions and then discuss your description and your responses with your mentor
>   a   What have you learned about families from the situations you have lived in?
>   b   If you were part for a church or faith community when you were growing up:
>
>   i   how did that church or community help strengthen your family relationships and address your family's special needs?
>   ii   how did your church or community include your family in its life and mission
>   c   If you were not part of a church or faith community,
>   i   how does your present church or community help strengthen your family relationships and address your family's special needs?
>   ii   how does your present church or community include your family in its life and mission?

3   Read resource material entitled *Families and Hope* on pages 6-9, and *I Don't* by Gordon Campbell on pages 10-12.

4   Use *Worksheet One - What do New Zealand Families Look Like?* on page 13 to compile statistical information from both the yearbook and census material comparing families in New Zealand in 1998 to those in 1978.

5   either:
>   a   Write 300 words on how the statistics on families are revealed in the way families are portrayed in New Zealand television and film, and what the word "family" means in New Zealand society today **or**
>   b   Write 300 words analysis of the statistics, and describe or explore what "family" means in New Zealand society today

6   Discuss with your mentor and make changes if necessary

7   With your mentor, use a concordance to find at least three references to families in the bible. With your mentor, discuss what these passages say about families, and compare with your own statement on what families mean in New Zealand today from part five.

8   Write a two-page summary of this discussion, one page on the biblical passages and one on the comparison.

9   Read the resource material on page 14 entitled, *What Is a Family?*

10 Either by writing 100 words or by some other creative means, show your understanding of the function of families based on your experience.

11 Read the resource material by M. Poole entitled *Adolescent Transitions - A Life Course Perspective* on page 15. Compare this statement with your own.

12 Reflect with your mentor on how these things influenced the kind of person you are today

13 Write a further 200 words on the function of families for adolescents today.

14 Read the resource material *Family Systems, A New Perspective For Youth Ministry*, by Gloria Durka on pages 18-28

15 Write 200 words describing where your family is in it's life cycle, using Gloria Durka's seven stages.

16 Discuss what you have written with your mentor, and together reflect on how this helps you understand both your own family, and the families of the young people that you are working with?

17 Write a one-page summary of your discussion.

18 Read the resource material *Casualties of Change: social and economic issues affecting youth* by Richard Eckersley, on pages 27-35

19 Discuss these with your mentor. Compile a list of at least one page in length of some external influences that impact on how families work. You may want to use some of the other resource material you have already read as part of this or other modules.

20 Write a statement on the family and its role in society, and in the lives of young people.

Step Three	Working With Young People and Their Families	8 hours

21 Explore ways in which individuals and churches respond to the needs of family using one of the methods below. Explain how these responses have affected the families they have worked with.

Either:
Interview people from at least three different churches about their ministry with families, and what affect that has on those families.
Or:
Read the resource material entitled *Culture, Faith and Family Ministry* on pages 36-42

22 Reflect with your mentor on the ministry offered by your parish or faith community to families, and write a summary of what you have learnt.

23 Use *Worksheet Two - Strengthening Families* on pages 43-44 to evaluate your church's ongoing involvement in ministry with families. Use what you have learnt from this module to outline how this ministry could be strengthened.

Resource Material

Geneogram

A geneogram is a diagram that uses symbols to describe a family.
The symbols used look like this:

male □   female ◯

married   date ◯   de facto ◯ - - date - - -
□————◯

separated □——/——◯   divorced □——//——◯
date   date

death ⊠ or ⊗   children of a relationship

boundary drawn around those people currently living together

FOR EXAMPLE:

Sarah lives with her mum and her mum's de facto husband Peter. Sarah's father remarried in 1983 and Sarah now has a half sister Mary who is eight. Sarah's brother Joe lives with her dad.

Janice 1983 Bob   //1980   Joy   Peter

Mary 8

Joe 17   Sarah 15

Families and Hope

by John Hebenton

Families are important. Very few would dispute this. They are important for the children who grow up in them. They are important building blocks for society. The government's appreciation for the importance of families was seen in the code of social responsibility, which held families accountable for many things. Yet despite families being seen as important, how well do we support families? Is this a family friendly society, or not?

THE THIRD REVOLUTION:

The present economic revolution has been described as the third revolution. The first was the move from gatherers and hunters to agriculture. The second was the Industrial revolution, which moved many peasants off the land and into the cities for work in factories. Home based cottage industries were largely closed down. The third is the present development of microelectronics and robotics. But unlike the industrial revolution that enhanced human energy, this revolution is replacing human energy.

A positive outcome has been the reversal of the move for people to have to work away from home. With a computer, modem, fax and mobile phone, people in certain industries can work from anywhere, and many are once again working from home.

A negative consequence of this revolution, especially over the last 15 years, has been the decrease in the number and variety of jobs available. Secretaries are being replaced with computers; bank tellers with money machines, eftpos and phone banking; postal workers with faxes and email. Factory workers are being replaced with robots that are more efficient and reliable. In the U.S.A., while manufacturing productivity has increased 400% since 1947, there has been only a 17% increase in the work force (Olson and Leonard 1996). From 1970 to 1990, there was a 121% increase in people working part time jobs, with wages for those jobs at about 60% the level of those paid to full-time workers.

In New Zealand, this is seen in the problem of the disappearing middle.   Middle income jobs have been vanishing in great numbers. (The Listener August 8 1998) As these jobs disappear, those with medium skills are pushed downwards displacing those who are less skilled. Gordon Campbell describes this as a deskilling of the workforce (The Listener August 8 1998). At the same time, many fill time jobs have declined in monetary reward. In the U.S.A., between 1949 and 1973, the average male   between 20 to 35 could expect real wages to increase by 110%. 40-50 year olds could expect an increase of 30% over the same period. From 1973, twenty five-year-old males could expect an increase of only 16% over the next ten years and 40-50 year old males a decline of 14%. In 1991, the real weekly earnings of the production and non-supervisory workers, who make up 89% of the workforce, had declined to below the levels of 1960. (Olson and Leonard 1996)

For the first time, children can no longer expect to earn more and have a higher standard of living than their parents have.   "The conventional wisdom which has dominated American thinking has been that anyone who works hard, develops skills and applies himself can and will enjoy economic success in the long run. Though this has always been somewhat of a myth, by the beginning of the 1980's the rapid growth of structural unemployment had begun to shatter the dreams of Americans, denying them the promise of upward mobility" (Lowenstein, in Olson and Leonard 1996, p.7). The statistics are very similar for New Zealand.

The deskilling of the workforce has driven down income levels for many workers. Professor Srikanth Chatterjee of Massey University recently published research that found the top 5% of income earners had increased their share of the national wealth by 25% over the last 15 years. The next 15% had barely stayed level. The bottom 80% had

dropped. (The Listener August 8 1998) The lower you are on the scale, the greater the drop. The Hon. Bill Birch described this as reflecting how people with skills, work experience and effort were receiving substantial rewards, the top 5% of them anyway. Others have described it as the captains of industry capturing the major rewards for the team effort of their staff, and creating huge inequalities. While some applaud this trend, others, including the conservative US Business Weekly are beginning to express concern.

US Health researchers Clyde Hertzmann and George Kaplan are now showing how such growing inequalities in income are reflected in the health outcomes across the developed world. This is much more than access to medical help. It is about diet, housing, stress and quality of life. Chatterjee points out that the degree of inequality also impacts on social cohesion and general goodwill. Because of this some economists are even beginning to state that such inequalities are bad for the economy.

ADAPTING FAMILIES:

Bronfenbrenner has described how the development of an individual is heavily influenced by the systems in which they live, for example the family. These systems are in turn heavily influenced by the systems in which they exist. This includes the work environment of the parents, and the national culture as determined and reflected in part by national and local government policy. It's all like Russian dolls, with each system set within the next system up. So how are families adapting?

Over the last twenty years, there has been a rapid rise in two income families. Twenty-something's are postponing marriage in greater numbers, living at home until much older, and having fewer children themselves. Once married, the impact of reduced earning has affected both what housing they can afford, and the proportion of their income being spent on housing. The rise of divorce has had a catastrophic economic effect on women, and the children of those families. In New Zealand, like in the US, the income of female headed households is less than half that of married couples with children. Families are being squeezed with greater debt levels, reduced access to housing and health, and parents working more and more hours to make ends meet. It can be said that our economy is killing families.

THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

Bill Lofquist from Associates for Youth Development, AZ, developed the grid entitled The Four Arenas of Human Service Activity. It is a useful way of helping people understand both the variety of purposes, and the continuum of foci involved in working in the social service arena. I first encountered it at a meeting of groups working with young people, where it was being used to show how each group had a particular role to play in working with those young people.

The Four Arenas of Human Service Activity

Purpose		
Prevention **A**	**1. Community Development** Efforts aimed at promoting the conditions within the community which promote the well being of community members	**2. Personal Growth and Development** Efforts designed to foster personal attributes that promote the well being of people
Remedy	**3. Community Problem Solving** Efforts which are reacting to community conditions which have created problems and require some kind of corrective or remedial action.	**4. Personal Problem Solving** Efforts that are designed to react to or correct behaviour in and individual when there is a recognised need. Focussed on bringing about change in a targeted individual. **B**

@ Project Adventure New Zealand

In any human service or pastoral activity we can work in a variety of settings, from the individual, to small groups, families, schools, towns, or even nationally. The focus of the work shifts from the individual to the community in which they live. The grid is divided into two halves, "A" and "B". Most pastoral and social work is focussed in the second half, labelled "B". The focus is on the individual, in particular personal problem solving, with a little community problem solving and personal growth and development. No community development occurs at all. While concerned for the individual, the church has always seen personal development occurring through faith in Jesus in the context of community.

From a Methodist context, it has understood that faith in Jesus leads people to work for a just and compassionate society that reveals God's compassion for us all. While many other organizations are unwilling to be involved in the "A" sector working for community development. But this is the churches primary area of work, driven both by our concern for people and also for providing concrete examples of God's love and compassion. Unless people can see that God is serious, then they will not take God seriously. If we are serious about families, then we need to work for the kind of society that supports them, rather than following an economic model that undermines them. This is not so much challenging certain government policies, although that is part of it, but more working for a vision of an alternative economic system and society.

The Hikoi of Hope is an example of a church working for just such a society. The Anglican General Synod - Te Hinota Whanui (that's a bit like parliament for the church), called for this Hikoi in May 1998. It was motivated by the stories told by Maori, Pakeha and Polynesians of the desperate poverty of many, and its effect on families. The Hikoi comes out of the recognition that poverty is now structured into our society more deeply than ever before. The gap between rich and poor is wider than ever. And as we have seen this is having a devastating effect on many, including many families.

Bishop Whakahuihui Vercoe said that a Hikoi is a time-honoured journey of expectation. It is setting out to find a new place that God intends for you. It is also a form of providing a united voice and a physical presence against unjust structures. While being initiated by the Anglican Church, the Hikoi was an action taken by the whole Church to support those hurting most. We walked to dramatise the reality of poverty in our midst and to gather the stories that show its human cost. Everyone who sees this poverty as intolerable was

welcome to join, for a Hikoi is an action in which we walk with others, and not alone. Those who went on the Hikoi prayed, shared stories and sang songs of faith. This was not a protest march or an exercise in partisan politics that looked for someone to blame. It was a positive statement for a just society, seeking: real jobs, a trustworthy public health system, benefit and wage levels that move people out of poverty, and affordable housing and accessible education. It sought a society that works for families, and all its members, and not just the wealthy few. Above all, the Hikoi of Hope was a sign to every New Zealander who lives in poverty that their plight is known, and is intolerable. And it said that we as Christian were no longer willing to leave it to economists and politicians to define hope for us.

"I Don't"

Marriage and home ownership rates are falling as life and work in the nervous 90's take their toll on traditional relationships.

Enough of babies, drooling and damp. Enough of scones and Playdoh and brunch coats and all the other dowdy props of married life. While we're at it, enough of weepy spinsters and their cats, too. No more of sipping Pimms in single's bars and flings with salesmen in shiny suits. Nineties woman, so we're told, is a beast of a quite different stripe: she is young, she lunches, she travels, she takes no crap, hear her roar!

By and large, this stereotype of 90's women-on-the-move sounds like the friends that Rose Shepherd had lunch with recently for the *Sunday telegraph:* "The are not manhaters or maneaters,. Still less are they unsociable. they have homes and careers and full diaries and oh, dozens of friends. They go out on dates. They travel at the drop of a hat. They are in demand. They go smartly through the basket-only checkout, with whatever takes their fancy. or they lie on sun-drenched beaches, they get seduced by bronzed lifeguafes. And, if they're sometimes lonely, they will tell you that it is far better to be lonely without a relationship than to be lonely within one...." And for why? "A fulfilling career, a disposable income, and independence ... are too sweet to be traded for a ring on the third finger ..."

Nice work, if you can get it. In the 1990's though, it is not that easy to land the combo of a fulfilling job, ample disposable income and a bronzed babe on call. The average New Zealand 19 year old in fulltime work, for instance, earns only $19,000 a year. As they move into their 20s, the young are having to strike a balance between career and commitment, within a climate of chronic job insecurity, unemployment and a student debt bill of $2.7 billion - and rising. that can really play hell with your ability to commit emotionally.

As a result, there's now a state of suspended adolescence, stretching right into the mid-thirties and beyond. Few people can afford the career risks that commitment poses, much less the adult freight (such as a mortgage and a family) that it entails.

There's no pat response. Frank, 24, of Kelburn, Wellington, figures that the people he knows are wealthier than most, bu they run the twenty- something gamut. Some are into serial, sex-sport kind of relationships. some cling together, kidding themselves that they're connecting, " while they're really just reinforcing their mutual sense of absence.They'll have this yearning need to communicate, and it's usually expressed sexually. "

So far, that sounds just how twenty- somethings always have been. A time of life when everyone is pathological, deep down. People just get tempted, Frank finds, to consumerise their relationships, and treat even the good ones as potentially disposable.

It's a throwaway world, friend. "Like, I'm sure in America there are guys who have a better relationship with their guns than they have with a woman. And plenty of women who have a more intimate relationship with their Prada handbag than with a man."

People learn to think that way from television. It's the media, it infects the mind. Everything is disposable, and something better is always coming down the chute. "No one ever sells you anything that has a soul. If you carry consumerist attitudes over into your relationships, it can really cause some problems."

So, seeking a soulmate nowadays isn't some blind joint endeavour, fuelled by hope that

two people can somehow be as one? Better not be. To Frank and his friends, the very structure of marriage poses a threat to anyone's capacity to survive as prosperous members of the culture. Especially bad for poor people. "Marriage can do very little but weaken them. For the enfranchised, the two-income couple, it's a strength. You compound your interests ... But you have to be bloody sure everyone is on about the same thing, which reckless and relentless acquisition, because, if anyone else gets in the way, then you're in real   trouble ..."

People no longer just muddle on through, then? "No that can be really, really fatal. To marry down is fraught. To marry without a reasonable dowry, if you like, is very tricky. The cost of having children is just   high ..." Not just for people, but for the planet.

Surprisingly, the Census figures are already starting to reflect all this. First, the obvious; the marriage rate keeps on falling, while the age at marriage keeps on rising. Since fewer people are marrying, - and people marry later - the divorce rate has started (in 1997) to level off. Between one in three and one in four of all marriages fail, and on in six throw in the towel before 10 years are up.

Some try again. A fairly staggering 36% of all marriages in 1996 were remarriages, which underlines how few young first-time potential candidates are treating this   trad form of commitment as essential, or affordable. Increasing numbers of people are living single, for longer. As Judith Davey lays out in her excellent book *Tracking Social Change*, one in three New Zealand marriages back in 1971 involved a teeenage bride: by 1995, only three in 100 marriages did so.

Similarly, couples during the 1950's and the 1960's usually finished childbearing by the age of 30 - the age at which couples today are commonly   *starting* to have children. Moreover, "more people are living in de facto unions,"   Davey writes, "but, overall, fewer people are living with partners, either legal or de facto."

What is going on here? Economic forces seem to be shaping how we choose to conduct our emotional lives. Since the early 1970's, marriage has stopped being the only socially acceptable gateway to adult life, sex, and emotional identity - and it no longer defines the roles between men and women, or dictates how children are raised. Children are still catching some fall out from these changes.

Formerly treated as a social good, children are now more widely seen as a private luxury, to be paid for by parents. Once the focus of family life, children in the modern economy loom as a career risk, and they can pose a threat to the family's economic viability. "While children under one year of age are often considered to be the most at need of a parent at home full time," Davey writes, "the proportion of two parent households of mothers in paid work has risen from one in seven (in 1981) to one in three, by   1996 ..."

Davey points out a fascinating spin off from this new economic reality: if a child's mother is a solo parent, the child increasingly stands a better chance of having Mum home fulltime during its first year of life. Is this to be treated as state dependence, or good parenting?

What's changed? A few decades ago, business wanted a stable and motivated workforce. Firms would promote job stability by rewarding gains in productivity with wage rises, and by investing in infrastructure, while the government did its bit by subsidising home ownership and paying for higher education. The whole system rested on the belief that hard work, rising economic growth and living standards were all connected.

Those links have largely been broken. The shift from manufacturing to service jobs destroyed many stable full time jobs - the kind that paid well enough to sustain the male breadwinner in a family - and closed the main   blue collar route to prosperity. Corporations now require a mobile and flexible workforce - therefore, they have a clear interest in

marriage and children being delayed. In many ways, the new economic order is profoundly anti-child and anti-family. New Zealand, for instance, is almost unique among developed countries in having no paid parental leave provisions.

People are also working very long hours - as researcher Anne Else has found, only one in three people now work for 40 hours a week, and a third do over 60 hours a week, with half of these sloggers being the self employed. so much for the 1960's wisdom, when the young were being told to start training themselves for a lifetime of leisure, now that technology could set them free.

Nest building is becoming less possible. Overall, fewer people can afford to buy their own homes. Census figures show that between 1991 and 1996 home ownership fell among New Zealanders in every ethnic category. In 1991, 52% of   Pakeha could afford a mortgage, but, by 1996, this had slipped to 46% - a figure below that pertaining before the economic reforms began in the 1980's. So much for the political rhetoric that New Zealanders borrowed and speculated too much on property in the 1990's: only a few of us did, although we are all facing the consequences.

The paths of the young are diverging, as wealth is polarised. In place of the old "trickledown" of prosperity and opportunity, wealth and life chances are now being sucked upwards and captured by a much narrower segment of society, one able to reside where the jobs are.

Researcher Paul Callister has analysed many features of these polarising "job rich" and "job poor" households in New Zealand.   the "job rich" tend to be two income couples with high paying jobs in metropolitan centres. They are similarly educated, ultimately have their children together and contract out most of their domestic chores - thus creating in the early 1990's, a surge in part time childcare service jobs. Beyond their domestic staff, these "job rich" have little contact with wider New Zealand. The "job poor", by contrast, are often trapped in housing areas in South Auckland or provincial centres, adjacent to a freezing works or manufacturing plant, now closed.

Politicians like to blur the fact that New Zealand is polarising. Or, as US writer Stephanie Coontz says in her book *The Way We Really Are,* they treat it as the healthy churning of a dynamic turbo capitalism. As Richard Prebble or John Luxton, for instance, about job losses from asset sales and tariff cuts and they point to the new jobs being created. The mismatch between the jobs old and new, and the question of who is capturing them is ignored. "This stance," says Coontz drily, " is historical perspective with a vengeance: it's saying that, even if your family goes down the tube, others will prosper."

Many women do now enjoy more choices, especially about controlling their fertility. Higher education remains the path - increasingly the only path - into the ranks of the job rich. Although men aged 20-39 still enjoy marked employment and income advantages over women, there are a few encouraging signs: between 1991 and 1996, the numbers of women aged 20-24 at university rose by 40%, compared to a mere 19% rise for men of the same age.

For Emma, 25, student debt poses a problem as she and her friends make their own way through university. "Some people get into debt so arbitrarily. It's literally a few weekends out, a few items of clothing, a stereo, some drugs, and that's it.   then you're tied into the public, and the only history you have of being part of the public is your history of debt. You live in the golden moment that has been created by credit. Then you're bound to the system that you can never criticise, because you're concentrating on ways to escape it."

Having said that, most of her friends try to live as if the debt doesn't exist. Like death, student debt encourages people to go through the stages of denial. Still, she's aware of how it affects the way she learns. Instead of people starting university open and able to follow their talent where it best may go, the debt functions as a form of social control. "In the very process of learning, one is accumulating debt. That changes things."

Right from the outset now, she believes, people are getting an education that is immediately aligned with corporate thinking. "Your natural stance is sort of apologetic. And if you choose to study anything but economics or accountancy the sense of guilt is magnified. You feel as if you shouldn't be doing and learning about anything not directly related to making money - or doing anything not directly related to getting rid of your debt. ..." Finally, says Emma, the debt controls students by being "a further agency of exhaustion. It just makes people feel so exhausted." She wants to make films. Making art is, for her, the sanest kind of response.

At the end of the day, of course, people do not behave rationally. To be human is to live on impulse, at least some of the time.   going back to our friend Frank: if he met Miss Right tomorrow, would he up and marry that woman regardless?

Well, Frank is a thoughtful guy, who counts himself lucky to already be in a fantastic, loving relationship. So, we're talking theoretically here. Deep down, her feels himself to be a hopeless kind of romantic.

"While I hear a great deal of cynicism and more and more young women tell me they will never have children, I believe absolutely in the notion of True Love. It may not be the constant daily occurrence that people used to believe in, it may reside more in just the ephiphanic moments ... but, if I found Miss Right tomorrow, sure, I'd give up everything, I'd go to prison, give my right arm, whatever," he says.

Then again, he has been sold the advertising life, too. Being totally honest, he knows himself to be an absolute consumer fetishist. So, if Miss Right happened to pose a great burden financially ..."That would be a less attractive notion, than if she were self-supporting. Or if she could compound my interest."

Worksheet One - What do NZ Families Look Like

Use both the New Zealand yearbooks and Census material to complete this worksheet

1978 FAMILY STRUCTURE	NUMBER OF FAMILIES	PERCENTAGE
1. Married couples with children		
2. Married couple without children		
3. Female lone parents		
4. Defacto couples without children		
5. Defacto couples with children		
6. Male lone parents		

1998 FAMILY STRUCTURE	NUMBER OF FAMILIES	PERCENTAGE
1. Married couples with children		
2. Married couple without children		
3. Female lone parents		
4. Defacto couples without children		
5. Defacto couples with children		
6. Male lone parents		

SENIORS 60+	1978	1998
1. percentage of population over 60		
2. life expectancy of men		
3. life expectancy of women		

LASTING MARRIAGES:	1978	1998
1. percentages of marriages ending in divorce		

AGES AT MARRIAGE AND PARENTHOOD	1978	1998
1. average age of women marrying for first time		
2. average age of men marrying for the first time		
3. average age of first time mothers		

BIRTH AND FAMILY SIZE:	1978	1998
1. average family size		
2. average number of children per women		

WOMEN AND WORK	1978	1998
1. percentage of married women aged 25-44 years with jobs		
2. total female labour force participation		
3. average wage/salary of women		
4. average wage/salary of a man		

What is a Family?

Families are seen as important to our society. 1994 was the United Nations sponsored International Year of the Family. In 1998 the national-New Zealand First coalition Government produced a Code of Social Responsibility in part outlining the responsibilities of those involved in families, particularly those of parents. Political parties brand themselves as the party that works to support the family. Even in church circles, family ministry has become one of the new trends in developing the mission focus of congregations.

So in all this attention, what do we mean by "family"?

There are a variety of ways that one can describe a family. The first is taking a **Structuralist** approach. That is, we describe the structure of any given family. This is the most common method. So, in the 1950's, we would have confidently talked about mum and dad in their first marriages, note, they were married, and their three children. In the untied States today, the largest family grouping is the blended family with parents and children from previous marriages living together, but with different combinations as children move between their respective parents. There is no longer one dominant family structure. Instead there is a huge variety of family structures in New Zealand today. This was the approach taken in step one.

A **Functionalist** approach is a second way of describing families. Functionalism like the name suggests sees the function of a family as being more important than the particular structure. When I ran a youth group programme on families, and asked the young people to describe the "ideal family" all but one gave me the structure. One person described the ideal family in terms of the functions it played in the lives of those who belonged. Yet it is the functions that families play in the lives of its members that make it such an important institution is our society. We will take this in step two.

A third way of describing a family is as a   **System**. A systems approach explores the patterns of interaction within a family. It can be seen as combining the structural approach with the functional. We will use this approach in step two as well.

Adolescent Transitions:

A Life Course Perspective

By Millicent E. Poole. Monash University, Australia

CONTEXTUAL DYNAMICS

The social world of adolescents is part of a system of nested contexts that are linked in dynamic interaction throughout the life course. The ecological theorist,   Bronfenbrenner (1976), delineates person-environment interactions within four frameworks that are useful in a consideration of youth in transition to adulthood:

(1) the microsystems of the immediate family or school settings (e.g., at the dinner table or in a science class);

(2) the mesosystems of the interrelations among the major settings containing the adolescent at a particular point and time in his/her life (e.g., the intersections among family, school, peer groups, television);

(3) the exosystem, which refers to extensions of the   mesosystem into concrete social structures that influence the social world of adolescents (e.g., the world of work, the neighbourhood); and

(4) the macrosystems, which are the overarching institutions of the culture or subculture (e.g., economic, social, and political systems that are carriers of information and ideology, and contribute to the construction of adolescents' views of social reality).

The evolving complexities of such socioecological factors will not be detailed here but can be found in Bronfenbrenner (1976), Hubner-Funk (1986), and Poole (1987a). Such a framework permits considerations of important contexts that comprise the social world of adolescents, and provide valuable insights into the views of young people themselves concerning their current social realities and possible future.

FAMILY

That the family is an important social context for youth in transition is not largely disputed, for example, for the development of social skills and as a support network. However, recent changes in Australian family patterns and leaving-home rates over the past decade suggest a changing role of the family in the life course of the adolescent.

Various surveys (Edgar and Maas, 1984) have indicated that marriage is no longer the main reason for adolescents leaving home as was the case in the 1970s. Today, the search for independence is a salient factor. An analysis of this trend has led Young (1984) to posit that an additional phase for adolescents has developed that relates to leaving home before the marital phase, that is, a change in the timetabling of social life phases.

The Children in Australian Families Study (Amato, 1987) presents an adolescent perspective on family life and the development of competence. Aspects of parent-adolescent relational processes are examined (e.g., cohesion, control, conflict, responsibility) in terms of various structural arrangements (two-parent, one-parent, and step-parent households). In particular the macrostructures that have an impact on the life of adolescents in families are considered (e.g., family resources, socioeconomic status, and participation in work). The perceptions Australian adolescents hold of their families are generally favourable. There were, however, realities of adolescents living in poverty in some mother-custody families, and under stress in some   step-families. There is some linkage out to the world of work (mothers and fathers), and some consideration of socioeconomic status in terms of structures and processes, which serves as a useful assessment of the dynamic between macro- and   microcontexts

Results of surveys found in the work of Edgar and Maas (1984) outline other social trends that point to a changing social environment in the 1980's. These changes have been in respect to changing adult sexual relationships such as older marriage age, an increase in defacto relationships, and higher rates of single-parent families and divorces. Such trends separate adolescents from the earlier more predictable pathways that typified the life courses in the 1950s or 1960s.

The changing family patterns of the 1980s and the growing need for the contemporary adolescent to seek early independence through leaving home has at one level provided a greater diversity of life choices and experiences for the adolescent. Alternatively it has placed greater pressure on the adolescent to develop the competencies and responsibilities in decision making in order to adjust to this changing social context.

Family Systems:

A New Perspective for Youth Ministry

by Gloria Durka

The influence of recent writing on religious socialization, the impact of systems theory on physical and social sciences, and the recent re- examination of the changing American family by Church officials and educational and pastoral ministers all give impetus to reconceptualizing the relation of youth ministry to family ministry. This is necessary for both youth ministers and family ministers to avoid working in isolation from and/or in competition with each other. Such divisions deprive each grouping from access to the insights and strengths of the other and from the possibility of being mutually enriched by the accrued wisdom of one another's experience.

My purpose in this article is to show how the field of family ministry can aid youth ministers in their own work. My method will be twofold. First, I will contextualize some of the current discussion about the American family in an effort to highlight the limitations and possibilities of ministering to families. Next, I will sketch a developmental approach to the life cycle of the family, and suggest how each stage postulates a cogwheeling of life cycles -the intermeshing of phase-specific needs at different stages of the life cycle. My hope is that this systematic understanding of the family will give youth ministers a fresh and richer appreciation of their own role; deepen their insight into their own effectiveness as ministers in the broader church and societal communities; and reaffirm and enhance their own professional and personal self-esteem.

THE CATHOLIC FAMILY IN THE UNITED STATES:
A CLOSER LOOK
The family has been the subject of much praise and criticism in recent years. Berard Marthaler suggests that the greatest changes in Catholic education and catechesis in the past twenty or thirty years have occurred not in the classroom or in sacramental preparation and practice but in the home.[1] Whether one believes the family is alive and flourishing, or whether one accepts the view that it is an endangered species, all agree that the forms of family life have undergone radical mutations in recent years. The extended family, the nuclear family, and the single-parent family are simply the external forms of an astonishing variety of family structures. The sudden general awareness that an important institution like the family has been undergoing radical changes in form and function has initially generated considerable public shock, followed by assertions and counter assertions of the family's approaching demise, and an unbalanced emphasis on the variant new experimental forms now widely tolerated in our society.

The changes that have occurred in the form and position of the family are all too familiar. We now hear about them daily from our mass media. Every report begins with the same or similar facts, but the interpretations vary. On the one hand, there are those who warn us that, unless we act now, the American family is in danger of failing apart - alarmists like Kenneth Keniston, Lawrence Fuchs, and Urie Bronfenbrenner. On the other hand, there are those who, like Margaret Mead in the recent past, or Marvin Sussman and Mary Jo Bane today, counsel us to come to terms with new family forms, and to rest assured that, in one shape or another, the family is here to stay. Finally, there are the reasonable middle-of-the-roaders, like Daniel Yankelovich, Nicholas Zill, and Paul Hare, who, adhering to their survey data, find most American families reasonably satisfied with their lives, but who admit that a minority, principally at the lowest income level, is in serious trouble.[2]

Aware of the confusion surrounding discussion of the family, and convinced of its centrality to Church and society, several Christian groups have rallied to uphold and affirm the integrity of family life. One such group is the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States. They issued a plan of Pastoral Action for Family Ministry entitled A Vision and Strategy, in which they dedicated the decade of the Eighties to ministering to families. The immediate goals cited in

this document are

1. to raise awareness of the Church to the realities and problems facing families;

2. to seek ways for families to be caring,

3. to instill in families a sense of mission; and

4. to establish structures that will enable and facilitate marriage and family ministry.

The publishing of the pastoral plan followed several studies which were conducted by the research team at the Boys Town Center of the Catholic University.[3] Among the many conclusions arrived at from these studies, two studies are especially relevant to the topic of this essay.

1. We have and will continue to experience a decline in the number of youth involved in formal religious education programs, and

2. (the other side of the coin) the family is crucial in the religious development of young people, yet it has been seriously neglected by a Church concerned with erecting schools and church buildings.

IS THE FAMILY DISINTEGRATING?

Every generation in this country since 1607 has been certain that the family has just collapsed. I agree with Gabriel Moran's formulation that we do not have a crisis in family life itself, but that we do have a crisis in our perception of the family. What does this mean? In an article written for Family Ministry, he suggests that family is a dominant image in our perception of the world.[4] When the world does not fit the image, we either over extend the image of the family, leading to a confused image, or else we try to fix up the world to make it fit a familial image. According to Moran, the crisis of perception comes about from the combining of two things: (1) the unclear but deeply rooted feelings that the human race associates with the word "family"; and (2) the extension of the image of family to almost every kind of organization in the culture. Since perception is largely a question of awareness, Moran concludes that the crisis is indeed greater today than ever before. Because our age is an age of increased awareness through worldwide communication, we can hardly avoid bearing about divorce rates, child abuse, welfare mothers, or absentee fathers. However, Moran points out that this change in the position of the family is not completely reducible to subjective awareness alone. There have been important structural and contextual changes in the family as well.

THE FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS SOCIALIZATION

A family is a small group of people who consider themselves bound to each other by enduring ties and responsible for each other's well-being. The family could be rather directly described then as a system of interdependent relationships, engaged in change and adaptation, and geared to the growth and support of each member. This is the family's primary function and its main psychosocial task. It is this experience of family, which gives us our first sense of who we are and of how we are related. It is the basis of our understanding and interaction. It is the foundation of our experience of God.[5] Arguing that the family mediates between the child's genetic and cultural endowments. Theodore Lidz suggests that the family life forms the most potent and recurring influence on the child's life:

> All subsequent experiences are perceived, understood and reacted to emotion- ally according to the foundations established within the family ... (this) becomes so thoroughly incorporated in the child that they can be considered determinants of his (sic) constitutional make-up, difficult to differentiate from the genetically determined biological factors with which they interrelated.[6]

Therefore, Lidz forcefully underscores the point that the family, as the basic social system, directly affects religious values as well as moral and human values. Today, religious socialization and education are made difficult because of the many myths that surround the family. Earlier, I mentioned one of these, namely, that the family is declining. There are three other myths that deserve mention here. The first is the myth of the self-sufficient family. There are two assumptions basic to this myth: (a) parents alone are responsible for what becomes of their children; and (b) families are free- standing, independent, and autonomous units, relatively free from social

pressures. These two assumptions form the core of the American myth of personal self-sufficiency. This myth has deep roots, but it emerged fully in the early 1800's. After the American Revolution, Americans felt truly independent. The expulsion of the Native Americans west of the Mississippi opened up vast lands for farming and helped confirm the view that any American with minimum talent and desire could become self-sufficient. The family became a special protected place, the repository of tender, pure, and generous feelings (embodied in the mother) and the bulwark against the raw, competitive, aggressive, and selfish world of commerce (embodied in the father). In reality, though, this represented only the upper middle-class. Most families lived different lives - such as the slaves, poor people, factory workers, and the Native Americans. The ideal merely defined them as groups to be changed, pitied, condemned, educated, uplifted, reformed, or Americanized. This ideal became a myth and the myth prevailed. Those who couldn't attain it often felt guilty, and any family that asked for help was regarded as an "inadequate" family.[7]

As long as such a myth is allowed to prevail, it binds us to give help where it is needed; it highlights the presumed inadequacies in the recipients; it serves to indirectly condemn and stigmatize them as well; and it even weakens what impulse they have to self-sufficiency. Even today, no one family can supply all that is needed for growing children. There is not enough time nor resources to give even a limited number of children what is needed at critical periods of development whether they are rich, poor, educated, or uneducated. All parents need occasional substitute parent arrangements; otherwise, they can become physically exhausted, socially starved, and financially overburdened. The point is families are not, and never were, self-sufficient.

The second myth is the belief that most children live in nuclear families that have only one wage-earner parent. The data indicate otherwise. Today, more than one in every six children under eighteen is living in a single-parent family, with the one parent generally also being the head of the family and holding down a job, usually full time. This is often not a temporary state, since, on a national scale, the remarriage rate, especially for women with children, is substantially lower than the rate of divorce in families involving children and this differential has been increasing over time. Also, the fastest growing component in the increase of single-parent families has been the rocket rise in the number of unwed mothers. More young women are postponing the age of marriage, but an ever-larger number of them are already bearing children.

The third myth is that professionals are infringing upon the rights and authority of the family, thereby contributing to its decline. To be sure, the relation of the family and the professional will have to be clarified. Not much has been done on the question. But unlike Christopher Lasch, who, in his work *Haven in a Heartless World*, assumed the destruction of the family, and the professional as the destroyers,[8] many believe the education of children in contemporary American society requires close cooperation between professionals and community groups. Much more discussion and exploration is needed on how to link efforts such as detached and indigenous worker programs, settlement houses, voluntary associations, and the use of mass media with family education in the schools. This includes discovering the central principles as well as the specific practice principles which should guide grass roots relationships between schools and the families they serve. I agree with Gabriel Moran who assumes that social workers, psychologists, school teachers, and pastoral ministers are going to continue to exist, and that a more appropriate question is how can people with professional competencies be of help, albeit limited help, to existing families.[9]

Professionals are here to stay. The 20th century cannot get along without specialized skills and detailed knowledge, and family ministry is no exception. Any wholesale rejection of professionals is not a route of liberation, especially for the poor classes. We cannot return to an era before 1830 when the home and the profession were not split.

SYSTEMS THEORY:
A BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO SPECIALIZATIONS
One of the most fruitful areas of research for understanding the complementary and interdependence of various ministries is general systems theory. A basic implication of the theory is that any model of effective ministry must be ecological in nature, ie., one that is attentive to the progressive, mutual accommodation between human persons and the changing environments in which they live as this process is affected by relations obtaining within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social contexts, both formal and informal, in which the

settings are embedded. While this is especially true for family ministry, it is difficult in a society in which the individual is celebrated, and in the professions whose preparation emphasizes service for individuals. The notion of family as a system is relatively new, and many working today in the helping professions have not been prepared to deal with families in this way.

Family systems theory arose from the practice of psychotherapy in which therapists became increasingly aware of the importance of the interactions between individuals and their families and their effects on each other. Drawing on ideas from process philosophy, group theory, systems theory, and communications theory, these therapists began to develop a body of theory to describe and to guide their practice with families. Family systems theory is based on the belief that the family is a natural social grouping. Every individual functions within some larger ecological unit, and for most people it is the family. A system is a complex pattern of various parts working together for the existence and survival of some greater whole. A family system is "the complex of patterns of behavior and ways of functioning with one another which family members believe necessary in order for the family to survive and perform its task."[10] Thus, it is important to conceive of individuals in their own context because changes in social context will result in changes in the behavior and inner psychic processes of the individual.[11]

Any system exists within the context of a greater system. For example, the cells of a biological organism exist in the system of some anatomical organ or system, and these organs or systems, in turn, are part of the system of the human person. This is an insight St. Paul used in 1 Corinthians 12. In turn, the human organism exists as a member of some primary social group which frequently, and most commonly, is the family. The family exists as part of a neighborhood or parish or some other functioning system. So family theorists came to realize that the family is not simply a collection of individuals but that each family is a unit which should be dealt with in its own right.

In addition to conceptualizing the family as a system, family therapists began to give more credence to the reality of constant change or dynamism as a natural part of any system. Both the individual and the family system he or she is a part of are continually interacting with the others outside the family system. The individual and the family are seen to be in a continual process of developing. Every event the family experiences - births of new members, deaths or losses of members, or contacts with nonmembers - brings about a resulting adjustment both in the individual and in the family system. The family system must, therefore, be constantly forming and reforming to adapt to and cope with the changes it experiences. The strength of the family is its ability to restructure itself to deal with the stresses that occur as a result of changing social conditions. There must be continuity in the family through these periods of restructuring for the family to survive, yet, within the system, each individual and subsystem must have some flexibility for change. The structure of a family is the unstated yet existing arrangements which members allow to govern family transactions. These transactions are the communications that continually occur between members of a family.

The transactions of family members will take on certain patterns over time, yet they must allow some degree of change for the family to be healthy. In systems theory, a healthy family is an open system - one in which members are open to new ideas, perspectives, changes, or growth. This is important for families because every experience is adding new input into the family system and memory. The problem family, according to the theory, is labelled a closed system - one in which change is viewed as threatening and in which members concretely fix themselves into certain roles and patterns of communication.[12] Family systems, then, are composed of the communications, rules, roles, beliefs, and self-worth of family members, and these aspects together will nourish the family members or dehumanize them.[13]

For very young children, the family is seen as the central arena of education; for older children, the focus shifts to the school; for adults, the focus shifts to the occupation. Yet, as the life cycle progresses, according to Leichter, multiple arenas of education co-exist.[14] This may be as significant as the fact that the focus shifts from one arena to another. Even if the several arenas do not have equal importance at all times, their interrelationships require careful examination, both in their own right and with respect to the ways in which various aspects of education are combined in the life of the individual. The reciprocal influence between individual growth processes and tasks and family coping patterns forces one to look at the family as the most potent milieu in which growth and change occur. The family operates, then, both as a transmitter of social expectations to

the young and as shock absorber of social change.

To summarize, the family constitutes a social system because it has the following characteristics:

ç   Its members occupy various positions that are in a state of interdependency. A change in the position, status, behavior, or role of one member leads to change in the behavior of other members.

ç   The family is a boundary-maintaining unit with varying degrees of rigidity and permeability in defining the familial and non-familial world. Family composition differs between cultures; shifts in family composition can be identified at different points in the life cycle.

ç   The family is an adaptive and equilibrium-seeking unit with patterns of interaction repeating themselves over time.

ç   The family is a task-performing unit that meets both the requirements of external agencies representing society and also the internal needs and demands of its members.

Implicit in a synthesis of developmental and systems thinking about the family is the assumption that the family is an adaptive unit with the resources for the growth and maturation of its members. In response both to the changing needs of family members and to pressures exerted from external systems, transitional crises are conceived as predictable and necessary. The healthy family copes with maturational and social demands through task management involving shifts in internal organization as well as in transaction with outside social and cultural structures. Ministry to families begins at this level - it is not limited to intervention. Ministers would do well to realize that the phase-specific family tasks have a cumulative effect, i.e., adequate task handling at early stages strengthens the family's ability to handle subsequent stages effectively.

The developmental perspective, which is grounded in general systems theory, has some distinctive advantages.

> The strengths of this (developmental) framework include the consideration of the internal functioning of the family systems without ignoring the external or environmental transactions of the family as a social unit. This framework is particularly helpful in viewing the process of family change. It approaches change as a facet related to the interaction of the individual member within and without the family systems as well as the structural implications of position and role derived both from society and from the internal aspects of family size, age, and sex of its members.[15]

For the youth minister, applying systems concepts to the family as a developmental unit which changes over time provides a frame of reference that includes relating to the young people in their care as members of a family system which is itself a system in transaction with other systems. Such a ministerial frame of reference is attentive to the interactional impact of individuals at different stages in the life cycle and their reciprocal effect on one another over time. A closer look at the characteristics of a developmental model of the family life cycle can, therefore, be enlightening and revealing for any youth minister.

THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE:
CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPLICATIONS

Each stage in the life cycle of the family is characterized by an average expectable crisis brought about by the convergence of bio-psycho-social processes that create phase-specific family tasks to be confronted and completed. These family tasks reflect the assumption that developmental tasks of individual family members have an overriding influence or effect on the nature of family life at a given time and present family themes that apply to family members as individuals as well as a group.

For our purposes here, the model begins arbitrarily at the time at which two people join in a coupling process and ends with the death of one of the founding members. In reality, though, there is no beginning or end. The stages are sequential and cyclical and involve multi-generation processes. [16]

Stage 1. Intimacy versus Idealization or Disillusionment

This stage is the first phase of forming a dyadic relationship and precedes the coming of offspring. The essential criterion of this stage is that the couple is making an investment in the relationship. Courtship patterns and expectations, the nature of early interactional pacts, the vying for power positions, and the assignment of roles and responsibilities are early indicators of the couple's mutual capacity for intimacy, of their progress in working toward intimacy. The ministerial task here is to help them to encounter each other as real, multidimensional people rather than the distorted images of fantasy.

Stage 2. Replenishment versus Turning Inward

This stage refers to the childbearing years and begins with the birth of the first child and ends when the last child enters school. An impending crisis in the life of the family is created by the birth of the first and successive off- spring. The birth of the first offspring probably presents the most complex adaptations. The couple that has achieved intimacy is in a position to make the necessary adaptations to a new family member who is helpless and demanding. Substantial shifts will be required in the giving and taking patterns of the parents regardless of how the caretaking functions are divided or assumed by the parents. The dyad has become a triad with all the attendant complications of triadic relations.

For ministers, the importance of replenishment as a necessary condition for responsive parenting raises some important issues. For example, what opportunity for refueling of parents now exists in our local parishes? How does the structure of the family as an isolated nuclear system impede the existence of replenishment sources? Of course, the answers to such questions are complex. Changes in the structures of parish religious education programs so that both parents can participate in familial and non-familial forms of communal life, and accessibility of parent life education groups which foster sharing of experience as well as information are some changes at the institutional level which would provide the nucleus of a parish network within and without the nuclear family and expand interplay points between familial and non-familial worlds.

Stage 3. Individuation of Family Members versus Pseudomutual Organization.

This stage applies to those families who have passed through the years of bearing and rearing preschool children. The major struggle for parents is to prepare for an identity that is not defined by one's roles and responsibilities within the family. It is a period of major crisis for many women who find their predominant role as caretaker of children diminished by their last child's progressive independence. Men, at this time, often experience a life crisis similarly related to questions of identity as issues of expectation, success, lifestyle, and death emerge. This task is probably easiest for the children whose increasing self-sufficiency and competency propels them out into the world of school and neighborhood.

The danger at this stage is a family that is organized to deny support and limit opportunities for development outside the family. The individuation that takes place as a result of one's expansion of self into other spheres of activity is not available to people belonging to families, which collusively seek to fend off the non-familial world. Such families can best be described as pseudomutual because they preserve harmony and deny differences; they confuse closeness with fusion. These families often shield a troubled child from confronting a difficulty by blaming problems on external factors such as "bad friends." It is pivotal for ministers to understand that the ability of the family to support and nurture individuation for all family members at this juncture may be the single most important feature of a healthy family.

Stage 4. Companionship versus Isolation

This stage applies to those families with teenage children. Shifts within the family arise from the developmental currents in the lives of individual family members. The burgeoning sexuality of children and the surfacing of separation themes arouse intense feelings for the whole family. The major crisis for family members rests on their ability to develop companionship outside and inside the family. For teenagers, this task is most naturally accomplished through the peer group which functions as an opportunity for experimentation with sex roles, modeling, interpersonal skills, and independence from parents. Much of youth ministry derives its agenda from this task.

For parents the task is more complex. Companionship can be sought by revitalizing the marital relationship. Companionship aspects of a relationship are often pushed aside in favor of parenting responsibilities. A shift from family activities to those shared and enjoyed by the couple can also fill

a place vacated by the children's refuge in the peer group.

Companionship also refers to the shift in parenting role from arbitrary authority to the negotiation of differences through mutual accommodation. Family ministers can assist here by providing opportunities for parents to improve their communication skills, and by teaching parents techniques of conflict management. This is crucial for parents and adolescents because in these families the spheres of authority are not so clearly delineated between parent and children. The "children" have cognitive capacities to deal with issues, ideas, and decisions. However, companionship does not suggest that parents and adolescent children become pals. What is suggested, however, is that new kinds of parent-child relationships be established, based on a recognition of the adolescent's growing independence.

The alternative to finding friendship with peers and in one's marriage is to suffer from painful isolation. Family ministers can help parents of adolescents recognize that those who do not renew their attachments to each other as a "couple" run the risk of invading their children's lives in a desperate effort to avoid the impending desolation that will be theirs when children leave home. Such fear can unwittingly impede the natural process of disengagement that every family system must eventually face.

Stage 5. Regrouping versus Binding or Expulsion
This stage describes those families whose children are leaving home to establish their own lives apart from the parents. A major crisis is experienced by the family in coping with the advancing independence of off- spring and the bio-psycho-social pressure for separation. The most important task is to allow for the departure of the children as a natural outcome of their growth and maturity. This depends on the viability of the marital relationship apart from the parenting function and on the resources within the sibling and peer relationship to support separation efforts. When disengagement occurs, normally there is a strengthening and shifting of alliances in the sibling subsystems as well as in the marital dyad.

As with all the previous stages, the ability to resolve the tasks specific to this phase depends on the degree of success of preceding developments. If family system is one in which belonging is achieved at the expense of the family may overprotect and invade the older adolescent's life a way which binds him or her to the family even further. This kind of experiences little pain, struggle, or anxiety surrounding their children's growing maturity, but at a very dear price. Their expectations of compliance and conformity can so totally undermine their children's self- confidence that they have little experience with adolescent rebellion. This kind of family may have triangled a child into the marital relationship (as mother's confidant, parental surrogate, or marital mediator), ensuring the adolescent a place, although his or her individuality has been subordinated to the requirements of the marital system. Because of this subordination, the older adolescent's growth is arrested and therefore normal separation based on psychological and social maturity is impossible. Dependency is prolonged and the growth of all members is stymied. Loss and separation are delayed indefinitely, frequently until the biological death of one or both parents.

Stage 6. Rediscovery versus Despair
This stage is the first of two post-parental phases. Although a period of disequilibrium of traditional coping patterns in the marriage may follow the departure of the last child, the durability of the marriage depends on the adaptations sought to reestablish a satisfactory marital balance. It calls for rediscovery. Without a revival of interest in one's partner and a mutual attempt by parents and child to reconnect, the "empty nest" can be corroded with despair. Rediscovery refers to intergenerational connectedness as well, with parents and children reinvesting in one another and renegotiating their relationship.

A related task is the renegotiating of the parent-child interactions to that of adult-adult. This task involves all affected participants and is an often overlooked and misunderstood aspect of the separation process. Sometimes physical and psychological distance is erroneously equated with separation. True separation of parents and children means that closeness can be achieved without fear of engulfment, and on the same continuum, without damage to one's identity. The family that has restabilized through the processes of rediscovery is one that does not feel amputated by the disengagement of children; the rejoining of children and parents in new ways, and the addition of daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, and grandchildren contribute to a sense of continuity and wholeness

Stage 7. Mutual Aid versus Uselessness

This stage is the second of the postparental phases and last stage in the life cycle of the family. The couple, once parents, are now grandparents, and the children are now parents. The major task is to develop a mutual aid system that would combat generational disconnectedness and feelings of uselessness. Mutual help (ministry) can be accomplished without the loss of dignity; roles may be initially redefined based on the exchange of services, and thus provide a structure of respect and cooperation. Subsequent negotiation proceeds to locate the overlap between self-reliance and reliance upon each other.

The crisis to achieve mutuality is not confined within one intergenerational family. The requirements of the task can be satisfied across families within heterogeneous age groups, neighborhoods, parishes, and other social groupings. Such intergenerational ministry and education encompass the essence of social and religious responsibility and are the stuff of authentic religious community

CONCLUSION

The attempt has been made here to outline average, expectable crises in the life cycle of the family which can help youth ministers to understand better that the adolescents with whom they work are members of systems, the most primordial of which is the family. Developmental tasks are oriented to the family as an ecological system. A basic assumption of this approach is that while qualitatively different adaptations are required at successive stages, momentum for task management is accrued from crisis to crisis.

In light of the above, it is hopefully more obvious that youth ministry has effects that are broader and deeper than those apparent in the lives of adolescents themselves. Effective youth ministry provides a matrix within which adolescents learn to build meaningful personal and social lives for themselves and within which they affect the lives of all members of their own family system. New understandings of the family, of systems theory, and of life cycles can help family ministers and youth ministers to realize that they are partners in building religious community. What forms this partnership could take are limited only by the depth and scope of our corporate religious imagination.

GLORIA DURKA is an associate professor in the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education, Fordham University, Bronx, New York.

NOTES

1. Berard L. Marthaler, "Planning an Agenda for the Eighties," *New Catholic World,* Vol. 224 (January/February 1981).

2. Kathleen Gough, "The Origin of the Family," in *Intimacy, Family and Society*, A and J. Skolnick, eds. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), pp. 41-60.

3. Hart M. Nelson, Raymond H. Potvin, and Joseph Shields, *The Religion of Children*; Raymond H. Potvin, Dean R. Hoge, and Hart Nelson, *Religion and American Youth*; Wilfred Paradis and Andrew Thompson, *Where Are The 6.6 Million?* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1976) ; and Andrew A Thompson, Che-fur Lee, and Wilfred H. Paradis, *The Next Fifteen Years* (Washington, D.C.: National Catholic Educational Association, 1976).

4. Gabriel Moran, "The Professions and the Family: Healing and Split," in *Family Ministry*, Gloria Durka and Joanmarie Smith, eds. (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980).

5. Samuel M. Natale, "A Family Systems Approach to Religious Education and Development," *Religious Education*, Vol. 74, No. 3 (May-June 1979), p. 247.

6. Theodore Lidz, "The Family as the Developmental Setting," in *The Child in His Family*, E. J. Anthony et al, eds. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1970), p. 20.

7. Kenneth Keniston and the Carnegie Council on Children, All Our Children (New York. Harcourt, Brace, Janovich, 1977), pp. 186-7.

8. Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

9. Moran, "The Professions and the Family: Healing and Split."

10. S.G. Luthman, *The Dynamic Family* (Palo Alto: Science and Behaviour Books, 1974), p. 14.

11. Salvador Minuchin, *Families and Family Therapy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974). Cf also Jules Masserman, ed., *Childhood and Adolescence* (New York: Grune and Stratton, 1969).

12. Luthman, p. 14.

13. Virginia Satir, *Peoplemaking*, (Palo Alto: Science and Behaviour Books, 1972).

14. Hope Jensen Leichter, "Some Perspectives on the Family as Educator," *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (December, 1974), pp. 175-217.

15. Diane I. Levande, "Family as a Necessary Component of Family Therapy," *Social Casework*, Vol. 57 (May 1976), p. 294.

16. Sonya L. Rhodes, "A Developmental Approach in the Life Cycle of the Family," *Social Casework*, Vol. 58 (May 1977), pp. 301-311.

Casualties of Change:

Social and Economic Issues Affecting Youth

by Richard Eckersley,
Principal analyst, Office of the Chief Executive, CSIRO, Canberra

BACKGROUND

Australians are not facing up to the seriousness of the predicament confronting youth today. Because of out failure, more young people each year become casualties of the changes sweeping our society. Suicide rates for males aged 15 to 24 have double over the past 20 years. Australians in this age group are now taking their own lives at a rate of one a day; suicide's toll of young lives is second only to the road toll.

The use of illicit drugs and alcohol abuse by young people have increased top the point where they pose a major social problem. Teenagers are starting to drink earlier, and are drinking more heavily; in the words of one report, their aim is often to "get drunk and get drunk quickly". Heroin is now claiming five times as many lives as it took a decade ago.

More and more youth are being caught up in crime. The incidence of most crimes against people and property, which are committed mainly by young males, has risen dramatically since the mid 1970s: for robbery, burglary, and other theft, it has doubled or more; the incidence of rape has risen more than 1505, and that of serious assault has increased four fold.

All these statistics can be qualified; other factors such as changes to reporting and recording procedures, classifications and legislation can affect the trends. Nevertheless, the figures point unequivocally to an alarming escalation in the social and psychological problems facing young Australians today.

CHANGING AUSTRALIA

Many factors - developmental, psychological and sociological - lie behind problems such as suicide, drug abuse and delinquency, and the reasons why these problems are increasing among young people are not clearly understood. the consensus among people working in the area is that the most important factors are the changes that are occurring in family life, in education and in work.

These aspects of life form a web of interacting influences that can compound the pressures on children and adolescents. Unemployment or difficulties at school can be a cause of problems at home; unhappy relationships with parents can lead to poor performance at school and affect job prospects; the growing pressures at school are in part related to the changing job situation. Thus it has been suggested that the increasing alienation among young people today stems from their sense of not belonging in any of the 'four worlds of childhood': family, school, work and friends. (Poole, 1987). In the past, alienation from one of these worlds - not getting on with friends for example - was usually offset by a sense of belonging and security in others - say, at home or school. Now, it is increasingly likely that young people may feel estranged from several of these worlds at the same time, leading to sustained social alienation.

THE FAMILY

The quality of care

For children, the family is the most important resource in making the translation to adulthood. And within families, it is the quality of the care that children receive that matters most. According to Adelaide sociologist, Dr Riaz Hassan, there is now reliable evidence of a close link between suicidal behaviour in children and parental relationships - in particular, parents who are frustrated, rejecting and unkind. Adolescent suicide can also be

linked to family conflict and breakdown. Adelaide child psychiatrist, Professor Robert Kosky, found in a study of attempted suicide among children 14 and under that suicidal behaviour was most clearly associated with: depression, family violence, divorce or separation of parents, and recent loss of parents or grandparents through death.

Sydney clinical psychologist, John Howard, says the development of delinquency can be associated with the quality of parental care, specifically with a father who is uninvolved or brutal, or absent, which then places more pressure on an already overburdened mother.

Research undertaken for the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse suggests a lack of involvement or communication with parents can be an important factor in adolescent alcohol abuse. Young people's need for more warmth and caring in personal relationships has emerged in recent studies. Dr Don Edgar, director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies says:

> If anything is true in the literature on childrearing it is that children need close attention from people who care about them as individuals ... the most caring teacher cannot provide the loving attention of parents or other family members. Children need quality contact with both parents or with stable substitutes for parents. The quality of those substitutes is what matters.

Changes in family life

There have been dramatic changes in Australian society in the past 20 years that have placed growing pressures and strains on family relationships, and which would help to explain the rise in youth problems. These changes include:

ç   Rising unemployment, and, more recently, a decline in real wages, that have increased the financial pressure on many Australian families.

ç   Changes in social attitudes and values, particularly in relation to the family itself and to the role of women. One important outcome, also linked to economic changes and financial necessity, is the much greater participation of married women in the workforce.

ç   Smaller families, so that there is now greater financial and emotional investment in each child, and hence a tendency to expect more of that child.

ç   The decline of many community activities and services, including the deinstitutionalisation of the mentally ill and disabled, making families more socially isolated and forcing them the become more reliant on their own resources.

ç   High youth unemployment and a tendency for children to remain longer in the education system. As a result children, while maturing earlier than ever before, are now often dependent on their parents for longer than used to be the case, creating another source of potential tension in family relationships.

ç   The accelerating rate of change, which means that the experiences of parents are becoming increasingly irrelevant to the world of their children, making parenting an even more difficult task.

According to Dr Gay Ochiltree, of the Institute of Family Studies, many of the today's parents are ill prepared for the task of raising children in the harsher social and economic climate of the 1980s. Entering parenthood with expectations shaped by the relative affluence and optimism of earlier years, they now often find they have to care and provide for young adults whose own ambitions and expectations of independence have been frustrated or delayed by shrinking job opportunities and growing educational demands. As a result, many parents have been left confused and floundering.

The situation for parents has been made worse,   Ochiltree says, by the confusion of the

government on youth issues, resulting in an inconsistent approach to dealing with youth problems, and inadequate support for families.

Divorce

In a world characterised by accelerating change and uncertainty, the family should, perhaps, a vital source of constancy and security. But it is an expectation that fewer and fewer families can fulfill, and this in itself has become a source of insecurity to children. According to the institute's study of children and families, almost half the children aged 8 or 9, and a third of the older children, aged 15 or 16,   feared that their parents might separate. (Ochiltree, 1988)

Divorce rates, while lower now than in the mid 1970s, remain three to four times those that prevailed in the 1950s and 1960s. If they continue at current levels, more than a third of Australian first marriages will end in divorce. The proportion of remarriages that will end in divorce in higher - about 40% - so that some children will experience more than one marriage breakdown. (Ochiltree, 1988)

Research into the effects of divorce on children has so far yielded inconclusive and, to some extent, ambiguous results. Where divorce has relieved the tension of a bad family situation, adolescents can adjust rapidly to the new situation, but continued hostility and conflict after divorce is linked to poor adjustment among children and adolescents. Some of the adverse effects attributed to divorce are more likely to be due to the poverty of many sole parent families, than to the separation itself.

Ochiltree believes more research is necessary into the long-term consequences of marital disruption before the question of the effects of divorce on children is really answered. In particular, more needs to be known about the effect on children who experience more than one marriage breakdown, or whose custodial parents have a series of partners.

Poverty

High divorce rates, together with the economic downturn and a decline in social security payments, have resulted in a sharp increase in family poverty in Australia. This is clearly revealed in a recent report by Dr Peter Saunders and Peter   Whiterford of the Social Welfare Research Centre at the University of NSW.

The report shows that the number of sole parent families in Australia grew from 180,000 in 1974 to 320 000 in 1986, a rise of 75 per cent. The impact of unemployment on families is seen in the doubling between 1980 and 1986 in the number of children in families where the chief wage earner is unemployed, to more than 220 000. As a result of these two trends, the number of families dependent on social security has increased. Social security payments to families with dependent children have fallen over the past ten years, both in real terms and relative to the poverty line.

Largely because of these three factors, the number of children living in poverty in Australia has grown dramatically over the past two decades, from an estimated 230 000 in 1966, to over 800 000 in 185-86. this represents a rise in the incidence of child poverty from 6.2% in 1966 to 20.7% in 1985-86.

Another recent report from the Centre, written by Bruce Bradbury and others, documents evidence of how unemployment, means tests, taxation and other factors can trap families in poverty, affecting the children's prospects as well as their parents. Youth unemployment, for example, tends to be concentrated in families where the parents have low incomes or are themselves unemployed.

While single parent families and the families of the unemployed are the hardest hit, other Australian families are also feeling the pinch. Personal debt has grown steadily over the past decade. While this may also reflect more readily available and serviceable credit, a

rise in the number of bankruptcies and the experiences of financial counsellors suggest that an increasing number of families are over-extended and struggling financially. This, too, is placing strains marriages and families.

Family Violence

Statistics on domestic violence and child abuse also suggest an alarming deterioration in family life in Australia in recent years, but in these cases the significance of the figures is less clear. Reliable data do not go back far, and it is impossible to determine to what extent increases are real, or reflect a greater community awareness of the problem, a greater willingness to seek help, and better community services for victims. Certainly, community demands on legal provisions and medical assistance have grown dramatically in these areas.

In NSW, apprehended domestic violence orders, which are sought either by a victim or by police to prevent further violence, have increased fourfold from an average of 4.6 a week in 1983, when the order was introduced through an amendment of the Crimes Act, to an average of 18.6 per week in 1986. Notifications of suspected child abuse and neglect in NSW have risen from 1500 in 1981 to almost 23 000 in 1987 (about 15 500 of which are first notifications, the rest being cases where authorities have been notified previously). About 60 per cent of the notifications are confirmed, with about 60 per cent of these being considered serious enough to require action.

Contrary to earlier beliefs, experts now say abuse and neglect of children, though not assault, is much more common among the poor. If this is the case, and given the rise in family poverty, it seems likely that the increase in notifications represents in part a real rise in child abuse.

HOMELESSNESS

Family disputes, violence, conflict, and total breakdown, are the most common reasons why young people leave home prematurely. Since the late 1970s there has been a rapid rise in the numbers of homeless youth in Australia, currently the subject of a national inquiry by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission.

According to 1985 estimates cited in a recent report by the Human Rights   Commssion, there are 40 000 permanently homeless Australians, with another 60 000 on the verge of being homeless. About 70 000 households in Australia lack the means to live above the poverty line and pay rent or mortgage costs. Included among these households are about 400 000 families with children.

The report warns that youth homelessness cannot be dismissed as a   short term phenomenon, and lists two sets of factors behind youth homelessness. One set accounts for why young people have left home and can find it difficult to return. They include family conflict and breakdown; emotional difficulties; drug or alcohol problems; pregnancy; and sexual or physical abuse. The other set of factors denies these young people the ability to cope by themselves, and includes: limited job opportunities; the low level of unemployment benefits; increasing private housing costs; little public housing for young people; discrimination by landlords against young people; few hostels and other alternative forms of accommodation with the means of young people.

The report also relates the problem to the policy of deinstitutionalisation - closing large children's institutions - adopted by Australia and many Western nations (without always providing adequate alternative support.) Youth homelessness is creating an expanding reservoir of alienated, chronically depressed, prematurely aged, welfare-dependent young people who feel worthless and powerless to change their lives.

CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

The plight of poor and underprivileged children in Australia is serious. But they are not the only ones that need greater support; all children do. Dr Don Edgar recently called for a more informed and intelligent debate about the place of children in Australian society, saying that children are suffering from the lag between changes in the family and broader institutional responses.

One major factor that Edgar believes lies behind the inadequate support given to families in Australia is our apparent indifference, even hostility, towards children. Without a change in this attitude, he says, we may never get more money for child care, better support systems for families with children, improved children's television, and recreational and education programs.

EDUCATION

Just as changes in the family are imposing greater psychological stresses on children in Australia, so too are the changes in education. Educational matters made up the most frequently raised issue in the 1985-86 Priority One national phone in about issues affecting young people.

In one major study of Sydney high school students, schoolwork was the most frequently cited reason for feeling 'down or low'. School and education (including exam pressures and teachers' attitudes) ranked fourth for boys and fifth for girls when they were asked to list up to three Australian or world problems about with they were most concerned. It followed war, violence, unemployment and, for girls, underprivileged people.

One of the most significant changes in education in Australia is the growing proportion of young people staying on to complete their secondary schooling. For example, Year 12 retention rates at Australian schools have risen from 34.8 per cent in 1981 to 53.1 per cent in 1987. The proportion of youth aged 15 to 19 studying full time has increased from 31.3 per cent to 1966 to 55.5 per cent in 1987.

There are two reasons behind this trend: staying in the school system is seen as an alternative to unemployment; and the perception that a good education is the key to getting a decent job, and even, increasingly, getting any job. The most obvious pressures of education are those of schoolwork and passing exams. Exams rank amongst children's most stressful experiences. As more students stay on at school and educational qualifications become more important in getting work, then more students become exposed to these pressures, and the pressures themselves will become more intense as education becomes more competitive. The result is that more students are likely to suffer psychologically, and to suffer more. Higher school retention rates have helped to make competition stiffer for places in the tertiary education system, and contributed to a rise in the number of young people being denied places in universities and colleges of advanced education.

But there is more to the problem than this. Research provides ample evidence of other tensions in the education system. The research suggests that while students seem to value education and even basically like school, they are also:

ç   disenchanted by the mismatch between student and school values

ç   Discontented with the curriculum, which they believe is too academic, often uninteresting, and irrelevant, students want more emphasis on the 'the whole person' and a much closer relationship between school and 'the world of work'.

ç   Dissatisfied with student/teacher relationships; students resent the level of staff turnover, and feel teachers do not care about individuals.

ç Unhappy with the authoritarian nature of school administration, which denies students any influence in decision making.

Dr James Walker, senior lecturer in the Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education at the University of Sydney, says in a 1987 report that the problematic relation between the curriculum and the post-school needs of young people is heightened by the economic, industrial and technological changes affecting employment .:

> If, perhaps, 'the world of work' has changed too rapidly, the curriculum has changed too slowly. Hence we have the problems currently facing secondary students and teachers. For a large proportion of students, the curriculum is perceived, at worst, as largely irrelevant ; at best, as relatively ineffective.

Thus social changes are adding to the tensions inherent in the education structure and process: more children are staying on at school when they would rather be working; because more are staying on to get a better education, the competition is fiercer; as the 'outside world' changes with increasing rapidity, the perceived gap between the curriculum and that world is widening, increasing students' frustrations.

EMPLOYMENT
The cost of unemployment.

The changed circumstances of young people in Australia are most clearly revealed, statistically, in the increase in youth unemployment over the past two decades. Unemployment consistently ranks among the top concerns of Australians, and young Australians in particular. Even the apprehension of unemployment has been associated with feelings of hopelessness, low self-esteem, emotional problems and delinquency among young people. (Gray, 1984)

The most widely supported view of youth to come out of recent surveys on unemployment is that of its negative psychological impact. Attitudes frequently associated with unemployment include anger, depression, anxiety, alienation, helplessness, guilt, loss of self-esteem and boredom. For adolescents, becoming unemployed after leaving school can significantly retard maturation. (Sweet, 1985)

Research in Australia and overseas has linked unemployment to mental and physical ill-health, suicide, drugs and crime. Once study in Victoria found the attempted suicide rate among the unemployed over a two-year period was 12 times the average rate. (Finlayson, 1987) An ACT study found that half of a group of 16 to 24 year olds seeking full-time work had sever psychiatric disorders, most commonly depression; in 70 per cent of the cases, the problem followed the onset of unemployment. (Dixon, 1988) The plight of unemployed youth cannot be helped by the finding of several studies that people, including young people themselves, tend to blame the umemployed for their situation. what is more, this attitude seems to be becoming more prevalent.

Apart from a fall in full-time jobs, there have also been qualitative changes in the jobs available to teenagers. The highest rates of employment decline have generally occurred in jobs that are skilled and require extensive post-school training, or in white collar and clerical jobs, which young people like. On the other hand, there are now more jobs for junior laboureres and storemen, and there has been very rapid growth in the numbers of marginal, deskilled, dead end, casual, part time jobs that are not linked to training or career paths.

THE MEDIA
For many people, the media, especially television, are an important influence behind the growing problems of youth. There are many charges made against televison, both the medium itself and the messages it delivers: it is turning us into passive observers of life,

living vicariously through the lives of soap opera characters; it is making us more violent, or at least more tolerant of violence; it impairs our children's ability to concentrate and learn; it inhibits the development of social skills necessary to make friends and get on with people; it stops families talking to each other and doing things together; it is making us fearful and anxious about the world; it tempts and frustrates us with images of a good life beyond our means.

How valid are these charges? According to Dr Patricia Edgar, Director of the Australian Children's Television Foundation, research into the impact of television has yet to provide clear answers, and the debate about it remains confused. For most children, watching up to about 20 hours of television a week probably does not do much harm, or much good. the situation is different for those children - about a fifth of all children - who are heavy viewers, watching 30-40 hours each week.

These children are watching so much television that they are not developing social and physical skills. In their case, however, sitting in front of the TV for so long is a symptom of other problems. They have low self esteem, do not have friends, are not doing well at school and often have family problems.

Edgar remains unconvinced that violence on television by itself triggers violent acts by individuals or is increasing the level of violence in society - the issue that dominates public discussion about the effects of television. However, the argument that so much anti-social behaviour is shown on TV that it is conditioning people to regard such behaviour as acceptable, is one that is extremely hard to test scientifically.

Edgar is more concerned about other aspects of television. One is that through both programs and advertising we are constantly being sold a lifestyle that is beyond our means - a pitch particularly tough for those, such as the unemployed, who feel the system has already beaten them. This aspect of television is probably a far more significant instigator of violence and crime than violent programs she believes. But what concerns her most, because of the anxiety and alienation it is creating, is the changing nature of TV news and current affairs. the increasing competitiveness between channels, which is increasing emphasis on dramatic pictures, and the almost instant coverage available of overseas events, mean we are being subjected to an ever increasing barrage of horror.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental social, economic and technological changes underlie the strains and tensions occurring in families, education and employment, and also contribute directly to people's unease about life today. Just what aspects of change are creating the most problems remains contentious. Some economists see the root cause of many of the problems as inadequate economic growth. The opposing view blames growth for many of the ills of modern industrial society. The evidence presented in this report suggests there is truth in both perspectives. This is, increasingly, the dilemma of growth.

Clearly, greater economic growth could ease problems due to poverty, assuming the poor get a share of the extra wealth generated. However, economic growth is also inextricably and increasingly linked to an accelerating rate of social and technological change, and it is equally clear that there are limits to our social capacity to cope with and absorb these changes and their consequences, quite apart from any environmental constraints.

The speed of change, the scale and power of the technologies we are developing and employing, and the complexities of our social systems demand that the key components of society - family, school, workplace, government - function at a level of proficiency far greater than was required in the past. Yet in many respects the performance of these institutions is not only not getting better, it is getting worse.   The mounting pressures of change on our social institutions are exposing and magnifying their every failing and

weakness. The cost of this social failure is evident in the plight of many young Australians today.

The full report, containing an extensive list of references, was written for the Commission for the Future and is obtainable from the Australian Government Publishing Service.

Culture, Faith and Family Ministry

by John Hebenton

"Recently I spoke with a couple who had moved to a new town with their work. They had been actively involved in their local congregation and their three children had thoroughly enjoyed Sunday school and Kid's Club. When they arrived at their new church they discovered that it didn't have any organised programmes for children. This didn't faze them too much because even though there were no Christian education programmes for children at their new church this couple had assumed a few basic things....

1. that the worship service would cater for all members of the family so that their children would feel welcome and have opportunity to actively participate in worship;
2. that the minister and/or elders would have some ideas to help them as parents nurture their children's faith at home;
3. that the congregation would welcome families and offer them support much like an extended family, providing opportunities for their children to get to know and share with some of the older members of the church so they would have grandparents;
4. that the church would offer home Sunday school or devotional resources or at least let them know what materials were available and might be helpful."

This story raises two very important issues for me as a parent, and as an employed youth facilitator, those of culture and faith formation.

WHAT IS A FAMILY?

Before we can even start to consider the issues we need to know what we mean by family. In the 1950's, we could confidently have talked about mum and dad in their first marriage, and the three children. This is no longer the norm. Many if not most of the families we come into contact with bear little relationship to that. We have single parent families, extended families; children brought up by aunts and uncles, or grandparents. We have families with no children, and families of adults living in community. We have families that are separated by huge distances. In the United States, the largest family grouping is the blended family with parents and children from previous marriages or relationships living together, but with different combinations as children move between their respective parents. . On way of understanding family is any group of people that have strong emotional ties to each other and regard each other as "their family".

Olson and Leonard offer another "We understand the concept of family to mean any network of 2 or more people linked over time emotionally and usually biologically and legally, sharing such things as a home, spiritual and material resources, interpersonal caregiving, memory, common agenda and aspirations" p.25-26. A New Day for Family Ministry. They go on to suggest we see families as systems of people, rather than a particular structure. And they suggest that emotional and behavioural links are more important then legal or biological ones.

Family ministry today needs to have as broad an understanding of what family is as possible so that the needs of each family grouping can be taken into account. It needs to be realistic of families now, not of what they might have been in the past. We need to be inclusive not exclusive of people, being careful not to reject anyone because they don't fit our understanding of family.

CULTURE AND CONGREGATIONS

Back to the two issues. The first is whether our church is the kind of place that children and families enjoy being part of? Does it have a child/family friendly or child/family toxic culture?

Stan Stewart recently conducted research with 120 young adults who were once part of mainline churches. He found that one of the most important factors that influenced whether

a young person remained in a "trad" church was the culture. In the report, *How to Keep the Young People You Have* (PCANZ 1998) he states, "the culture of the congregation is made up of things like:
ç   the way the life of the congregation works;
ç   the people/things the congregation values;
ç   the way the congregation make decisions;
ç   the unwritten rules that governs the congregation's life. At this time, as far as youth and young adults are concerned the culture of most   trad congregations is TOXIC" (p.45)

I would guess (and it is only a guess) that the effect of this congregational culture is the same for many families as well. I asked other youth and family workers on an email discussion group for their advice and was repeatedly told that the key to any ministry among families is the connections in the congregation, how many congregations are community or family in itself.
ç   According to Stan, these are the things that would encourage youth and their families: an atmosphere of welcome and honesty, which includes close durable friendships across all the ages;
ç   worship that can be understood and related to by young and old, including having people of all ages involved in leadership;
ç   a willingness to risk things, and fail;
ç   having buildings and facilities that are there to be used, where wear and tear is expected and accepted;
ç   looking for ways to encourage growth in all age groups, including those in their senior years.

FAITH FORMATION
This leads to the second issue, where children and youth learn about faith. So back to the story of the family that moved. One of the key things the couple we started with realised was that family, not church is the fundamental place of faith formation. Despite the repeated claims that the media, teen culture and peers are usurping the families influence on adolescents today, research still finds that the family continues play a primary role in the tasks of values clarification, and religious and faith identity that face adolescents. In his particularly helpful article "Youth Ministry: Reflections and Directions" Tom   Zanzig suggests that a primary concern of those involved in youth ministry must be communication with and the involvement of "parents" of adolescents. "Parents must be recognized as the key "relational ministers", those who more than anyone else can create the sense of trust, love and concern that is so foundational to all future openness to faith. Those in youth ministry must help parents to fulfill this vital role, by offering programmes in adolescent development, for instance, and by helping parents develop the necessary communication skills with which to build healthy relationships with their adolescent children. Parents must be seen as the "primary evangelizers" of their children. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that no single factor more influences the faith development of persons than does the witness and faithful life of parents." "Youth Ministry: Reflections and Directions" by Tom Zanzig. Found in *Readings and Resources in Youth Ministry,* edited by Michael Warren

Back to our parents. They had relied on the church almost exclusively to provide Christian education and to nurture their children's faith in Jesus. Their church, like most, seemed to have no comprehension of this very simple fact. Parents were not encouraged nor equipped by their church to take an active part in forming their children's faith, other than by helping with children's activities and programmes at church. This is as true for teenagers as it is for children.

A Ministry among Families

In Ministry with Families: what your church can do? Heather Busch states "There are families in every church, and everyone belongs to a family, but this does not necessarily mean that churches have an effective family ministry." Busch states that developing a family ministry is more than running some activities for children and their families. It is much more than having families come along to church, having occasional/regular all age or family worship, or even running a Sunday school. Like Christian education or stewardship it needs someone or a group to take responsibility for it, and it needs to be planned. It needs to be intentional. If you just let it happen, it won't!

A New Day for Family Ministry provides a good base on which to explore the scope of family ministry. It broadens the reader's appreciation of families and the issues they face. It helps congregations identify what the Christian family offers to families both in the church and in the local community. It includes questions for each chapter to help clergy and parishes use this book to reflect on their own family ministry, and to develop it further.

In it Olson and Leonard help us gain a thorough comprehension of the scope of 'family ministry" including our understanding of the family, what it is we offer families, and how. Having defined families as systems of people, they go on to look at the fast breaking cultural developments to which families in America (and New Zealand) must adapt, and how these are reflected in the long-term trends in family life over this century. These include the aging structure of the population, the rise of feminism, the search for psychological satisfaction, especially in marriage, and the changing economic situation. All this, they suggest, has important implications for how we do family based ministry. Rather than helping individuals in families, it is about strengthening the family systems that the individuals live and grow in. The motivation for this is not so much for the individuals in the family system, but to help the family realise and live out its God given mission as a family, for the sake of others.

Supporting Families in the Congregation

Olson and Leonard suggest that there are five ways of supporting families: These are:

1. **Seeking a family friendly culture: in church, government, the workplace and media.**

For the church this means:
   a. ensuring all members of a family are welcomed, given the books etc...;
   b. having all ages lead worship;
   c. using art work that portrays families of all types
   d. networking families
   e. being careful with schedules and respecting families' agendas

2. **See Family Life as a Base for Mission:**

How do we help families discern their mission as a family, and get involved in that area of mission?

1. **Enriching Family Life:**

Helping families be a safe, caring and healing place. This includes:
   a. having a vision for what is a healthy family;
   b. supporting family systems, and providing education for all members;
   c. advocating for families at local and national government level;

2. **Strengthening the Commitment to the Covenant of Marriage:**

This refers to both the preparation and follow up of those married in our churches, and includes:
   a. Enrichment opportunities for those who are married
   b. Helping couples develop skills they need to build a long lasting relationship

      c.   Supporting couples with support groups

      d.   Using older couples to mentor newer couples

Develop a Theology and Strategy for Ministry with Singles:

Every person in our church is a member of a family, even if they do not live together. Olson and Leonard state that too often single people are treated as married people in waiting, or somehow not complete. We need instead to lift up and celebrate their presence and gifts in our churches. This includes involving and integrating them in what is happening with families. It also involves offering ministry in a focussed way, to those who are never married, widowed, divorced and single parents

Paul Yarrow, the Queensland Synod (State) Family and Early Adolescent Ministry Co-ordinator for the Uniting Church offers these ideas to make homes places where faith is shaped and nurtured:

1.   Affirm parents and significant adults as having an important role in the faith formation of our children and young people;

2.   Teach parents skills that enable them to nurture faith in their children;

3.   Provide resources that assist parents in forming faith in their children;

4.   Share ideas about experiences, activities, and resources that have helped our families share faith stories. Things that have enriched our relationship with God;

5.   Provide opportunities for intergenerational learning and sharing together as the household of God. Paul cites the example of a church that ran Sunday afternoon services, which everyone took turns at leading, and which included activities for all ages, as well as "normal" worship things like singing and praying.

IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUTH MINISTRY

How can we get parents to support our programme? This seems to be one of the big questions for youth leaders and around the country. Is this is a very helpful question to even ask?

Every now and then it is good to ask what our ultimate aim for what we do in youth ministry is. Leif Kehrwald (Vision and Challenge 3.1. 1996, p12) suggested that the ultimate aim is the faith maturity of young people, "where they recognise God's gracious activity in their lives and respond freely and personally and along with that have a growing desire to join with other believers. If we agree with this ultimate aim, we need to know what the main influences in young peoples growing faith are.

Traditional approaches to youth ministry have understood faith maturity to happen through educational programmes run with groups of young people (Bible class, youth groups). Despite the repeated claims that the media, teen culture and peers are usurping the families influence on adolescents today, we have seen that research still finds that the family continues play a primary role in the tasks of values clarification, and religious and faith identity that face adolescents. What this means is that the family is generally going to have more impact on a young persons faith maturity than the programmes we run. We can't replace the family, we can only work with the family. Youth ministry becomes a ministry among and with young people and their families. As a result of this understanding, some writers in youth ministry are increasingly stressing the importance of building a positive relationship with parents. "The best thing a parish can do for its young people is to be more involved with their families" (Kehrwald 1996: p.8)

Back to the original question of how can parents and families be more involved in the youth programmes? If families have a greater influence then the youth ministry programmes we run, then rather than placing the emphasis on the youth programme, as the above question does, the emphasis would be better placed on the family. The question to ask then becomes: how can the programme or the youth ministry be more involved with

parents and families? This reversed question implies a mutual partnership between church and families/parents, acknowledges the genuine faith expertise of parents and families, and seeks for interdependence and dialogue. This reversed approach includes resourcing parents in their parenting, building positive relationships between parents and those involved in the parish youth ministry, providing opportunities for parents to shape and contribute to the youth programme offered and for occasions for parents and their children to come together to such programmes. "When we focus on "getting our programme involved with parents and families," that implies a mutual partnership. We begin to recognise the powerful influence that family and household life has on young people. We know they are not spiritual slates that we inherit each February and return at Christmas, yet without a home connection, our programmes can mistakenly reflect this attitude." (Kehrwald 1996: p8.)

GROWING A HOME CONNECTION

Kehrwald offers four questions that need to be considered if a partnership with parents is to be fostered. They are:

ç   how do we as church leaders recognize the genuine faith expertise of parents and families?

ç   how do we as church leaders acknowledge our healthy dependence on parents, beyond the role of chauffeur?

ç   how do we go beyond just informing families about our programme, to creating an atmosphere where they feel comfortable to dialogue with us?

ç   Are we willing to risk the status quo (" the way we've always done it") and venture into uncharted waters? (Kehrwald 1996: p.8)

The key to any partnership is the level of communication that happens between the parties, and the style of communication. These questions highlight the attitude that we in youth ministry need to have towards the families of the young people we minister among. Do we see the family as important to what we offer, or are parents viewed simply as providers of transport? Do we know the parents, or are they simply names on a roll? I acknowledge that this is the worst case scenario. The reality is that we will know some of the parents very well, and other not very well at all. The invitation here is to build on the relationship we have, and to develop new ones.

So how can we enhance the partnership with the family?   Kehrwald suggests:

1. **Get to know the parents and families**:
As you build a good rapport with the families, they in turn will place more confidence in you and the ministry that you offer. Don't just send a newsletter home with what you have organized, but ask them what they would like to see happen. You will also more easily see the gifts they have to offer, and how you might be able to resource them in their task of parenting.

2. **Know the family make-up of your young people:**
As you get to know the families, you will also learn more about the style of family. For example, which are single parent families, two-parent families' etc.... This kind of information is helpful in tailoring your ministry to the particular needs and family concerns of your young people.

3. **Provide a forum for parents to come together for mutual support and enrichment**:
Many parents worry about whether their child is behaving and maturing "normally". There is normally a depth of wisdom and expertise amongst parents that can quickly allay such fears, if there is a forum for it to be shared. Such a meeting can also prove good occasions for parents to talk over discipline and boundaries. The clear message of such occasions is

that the church takes parenting seriously, and wants to support parents in their role.

CONCLUSION

For any family ministry to develop, the whole congregation needs to see that they have a role to play. Everyone is part of a family of some sort. Everyone has something to offer other members of families. Like youth ministry, or children's ministry, we all have a role to play. And remember

ç   There are no easy answers

ç   Ministry among young people and families is important;

ç   We need a broad understanding of family;

ç   We must recognise the family as the primary place where young people learn about faith;

ç   The culture of a church is one of the most important things that affects a congregation's ministry with families;

Family ministry requires:

ç   deliberate planning, including having someone or some group take responsibility for the development of this ministry.

ç   getting people in the congregation to pray for the ministry;

ç   finding out the needs of families in the congregation and the wider community;

ç   identifying the resources and gifts the members of your church have to offer;

ç   developing a vision for family ministry in your church

Further Reading

Here are some resources that might be helpful for the ongoing development of your family ministry

How to Keep the Young People You Have, and Get More, an out-of-the-closet report by Stan Stewart: 1998, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand

A New Day for Family Ministry, by Richard Olson and Joe Leonard: 1996, The Alban Institute.

Ministry with Families - what your church can do, by Heather Busch: J.B.C.E. Melbourne

Comprehensive Approach to Youth Ministry, edited by Craig Mitchell: 1997, J.B.C.E. Melbourne

"Families And Youth Ministry" in   *Crumbs* March 1997.

Worksheet Two - Strengthening Families

This is a parish self evaluation exercise devised by the Working Group on Strengthening Families for participants at Families 2000, April '91 - Chicago.

TWO QUESTIONS:
1. What basically unmet needs in the areas identified do you, your congregation, or your denomination have?

2. What resources do you, your congregation, or your   denomination have to strengthen families in the areas identified?

Area 1 Families need help in moving from stage to stage in the family life cycle.

Needs:

Resources:

Area 2 Families need help in developing healthy sexuality and in understanding the relationship between sexuality and spirituality.

Needs:

Resources:

Area 3 Families need help in value formation and in understanding the relationship between faith and values.

Needs:

Resources:

Area 4 Families need help in balancing work and family. Particularly in handling stress and managing the use of time.

Needs:

 Resources:

Area 5 How can the church as the community of faith programme for family ministry that supports faith development? How can inclusiveness be assured and supported?

Needs:

Resources: