

# Working women resent each other—YWCA staffers

By Diane Andersen

Although little research has been done on the subject, women who work with other women often resent each other, said two members of the Lincoln YWCA staff.

Sheryl Schrepf, executive director of the YWCA, and Barbara Cameron, YWCA women's program director, Wednesday discussed dealing with conflict and support of other women as part of the Women Speak series sponsored by the Student Y.

"So much of what happens is a socialization process," Schrepf said.

She said women have been taught to be passive, nurturing and emotionally immature, so they have a hard time dealing with conflicts at work and accepting aggressiveness in other women.

"Jealousy has been a big thing for women for a long time," Schrepf said, adding that resentment against female co-workers can be because of a man or because of envy of a professional role. "It's a very internal thing, I think," Schrepf said.

**CAMERON SAID** women working with women need to support each other and the choices made by each one.

"It doesn't mean you like or respect everyone you work with. It doesn't mean supporting incompetence," Cameron said.

Cameron said women can support each other by judging both sexes by the same standards and by not expecting women to conform to stereotypes. Women should help each other with making important decisions, sharing information, and then supporting those choices, she said.

"Women usually only get support when they're down, and that tends to keep them down," Cameron said.

Motherhood is just as valuable to some women as a career, the two YWCA staffers said, and women who are homemakers or work part-time should be accepted as

equals, they said.

Schrepf said there is a real danger of reinforcing the passive behaviors women learn in childhood at a college institution. She said "sexism runs rampant" in textbooks and teaching methods for her field, social work. In that area 75 percent of the workers are women, but only 25 percent social work management is comprised of women.

"**THE NEGATIVE IDEAS** you come in with are going to be supported (at college)," Schrepf said.

When she was in school, no one questioned Freud's theory of penis envy, which presumes all women subconsciously wish they had a penis. Freud said penis envy was the root of all women's psychological problems, Schrepf said.

"I thought it (the theory) was ridiculous, but I didn't say anything," Schrepf said.

Schrepf said she believes it is important to eliminate sexist language from printed materials to help women visualize themselves in professional roles. "Chairperson" and "he or she" language should be used much as possible, Schrepf said.

Schrepf said she found it disappointing to learn that many females who are high achievers usually choose careers in teaching, nursing or homemaking.

"Conflict has always been difficult for me," Cameron said.

Women shouldn't personalize everything that happens to them at work, she said. Cameron said women tend to blame their failures on themselves and think their successes are just luck or someone else's credit. Men, she said, accept success and blame failure on outside forces.

**CAMERON SAID** the all-women organization of the YWCA staff eliminates the problems women have working with men, but also allows women to use their

positive characteristics of nurturing and understanding others.

"A lot of us (the YWCA staff) have formed support groups of our own," she said.

Organized support groups also are available for working women. Psychology student Pat Rhodes said an educational psychology class, "Sex Roles and Counsel-

ing" is helpful. The class may be canceled however because of lack of support.

Cameron said a group of women with small business, Women Entrepreneurs, recently has been formed in Lincoln. Also, the Chancellor's Commission in the Status of Women is honoring tenured female faculty members this year at UNL, she said.

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