Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Dancing around the families: A grounded theory of the role of neonatal nurses in child protection

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy
in
Nursing

at Massey University [Albany]
New Zealand

Tina Anne Saltmarsh
2011
The Ministry of Health objectives aim to protect the health and safety of children by reducing death rates, injury and disability from abuse. Family Violence is a significant health issue that impacts on children. Health professionals are key in the screening for Family Violence and assessment for child abuse. The philosophies of Family Centered Care and Developmental Care underpinning neonatal nursing practice are especially relevant for child protection. Nurses are in an ideal position to intervene before abuse perpetration. Increased awareness of child maltreatment and requirements for screening and reporting led to my research question, “What is happening for Neonatal Nurses in Child Protection?” Glaserian Grounded theory guided this study and the analysis of data. A total of ten semi-structured interviews was undertaken with nurses working in the participating neonatal units. Data were analysed and constructed into a substantive grounded theory, Dancing Around the Families and a Basic Social Psychological Process of Knowing at Risk Families. Dancing Around the Families explains nurses’ coping and acting upon child protection issues. It is about the creative conversations and work required to help support or enhance the infant’s safety. Difficulty with communication and transparency of information sharing between services, and differing perspectives creates this dance. Knowing at Risk Families captures how neonatal nurses construct child protection by acting on their personal and professional levels of knowledge. Nurses act on gut instincts, intuition or Red Flags to put supports in place for the protection of the infant. Child protection presents a state of conflict for nurses, where a sense of social justice prevails in their care, and their ideals and reality are often not congruent. Implications for practice require nurses to consider the way we look at families, as well as family capacities, capabilities and health literacy, and the importance of facilitating attachment.
Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by acknowledging that without the help and support of colleagues, friends and family, along the way this research study would not have been possible. To all of you who have shown an interest in this study, participated, listened and encouraged, I thank you. It has definitely been a journey, one that I hope individuals will find interesting, relate to and identify aspects for application to their areas of practice.

Thank you to the managers of the neonatal units who were approached to grant access to advertise this study in order to seek participants. Your interest and support was greatly appreciated to commence this study.

Particular thanks to the participants – to each and every one of you, I am very grateful. It was a pleasure to meet you all and hear your experiences, frustrations and challenges. Thank you for your trust in speaking with me and sharing; your passion was evident and inspiring. Your contribution to this study is invaluable and I trust you will hear your voices throughout and recognise your input into the research phenomena. Your input into this study is indicative of the contributions you already make to the neonatal population and their families and your passion to enhance outcomes and make a difference.

To my supervisor Dr Denise Wilson. I am unsure exactly how to articulate just what a journey this has been, or where to begin to thank you. From the beginning, to the end, you have helped supervise the study and the writing. When I faltered you did not, and with your calm demeanor you talked me through issues, continued to challenge me, encourage and inspire me, and would not let me give up. I have appreciated and enjoyed your sense of humour, our conversations putting the world right, your knowledge which seems unlimited, and understanding of this topic. I am sincerely grateful.

Last but not least – To Nana, who passed away during this study but who always encouraged and supported me with my studies, I hope you would be proud. My husband Derek, and children, Oliver and Brittany. Your love and patience has been amazing and I am very lucky to have such a wonderful family. Derek your encouragement and willingness to support me and understand the time and attention that it has taken has been invaluable to help me finish, for that and many other reasons I am eternally grateful.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ...................................................................................................................................1

Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................2

Table of Contents ....................................................................................................................3

List of Tables ............................................................................................................................7

List of Figures ...........................................................................................................................7

Chapter One ............................................................................................................................8

Introduction .............................................................................................................................8

Operational Definitions ...........................................................................................................9

Child Maltreatment ..................................................................................................................9

Child Physical Abuse .............................................................................................................9

Child Emotional/Psychological Abuse ..................................................................................9

Child Neglect ........................................................................................................................10

Family Violence .....................................................................................................................10

Routine screening ..................................................................................................................10

Child Abuse and Neglect in New Zealand ..........................................................................10

Family Violence and Child Maltreatment .............................................................................12

Rights of the Child ................................................................................................................13

Implications of Child Maltreatment and Neglect .................................................................14

Practice Implications and Relevance to Neonatal Nurses ................................................14

Research Question and Study Aim ......................................................................................16
Chapter Overviews........................................................................................................................................17

Chapter Two: ...............................................................................................................................................19
  Justification for the Research..................................................................................................................19
  Search Strategy.........................................................................................................................................19
  Societal Norms and Values.......................................................................................................................20
  World Policy Recommendations...............................................................................................................20
  Current Political and Legal Influences in New Zealand...........................................................................21
  Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect...................................................................................................22
  Social Predictors of Child Maltreatment....................................................................................................23
  Parent Predictors of Child Maltreatment...................................................................................................23
  Cultural Perspectives and Attitudes Toward Children..............................................................................25
  Child Predictors of Child Maltreatment....................................................................................................27
  Shaken Baby Syndrome............................................................................................................................28
  Attachment Difficulties.............................................................................................................................29
  Outcomes of Infant Abuse and Neglect....................................................................................................31
  Health Care Provider Responses..............................................................................................................35
  Summary...................................................................................................................................................37

Chapter 3 ....................................................................................................................................................38
  Research Design .......................................................................................................................................38
  Methodological Underpinning..................................................................................................................38
  Research Aim and Question.....................................................................................................................40
  Participant Recruitment............................................................................................................................40
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent process</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing Rigour</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four (Findings)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing Around the Families</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing at Risk Families</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Flags</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to Us</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting the infant</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodgy Families</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Human</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging to the Family</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having Faith in the Family</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating Parenting</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaping the Infant’s Safety</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Faces of Families</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing the needs and rules</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties with Child Protection Services</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaping Safety</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chapter Five

- Implications from Practice
- Knowing At Risk Families
- Social Justice
- Practice Philosophy
- Red flags and Intuition
- Building on Family Abilities
- Overcoming Barriers
- Summary

## Chapter Six

- Conclusion
- Recommendations
- Future Research
- A Final Word

## References

## Appendices

- Appendix 1: Information Sheet
- Appendix 2: Consent Form
- Appendix 3: Transcriber Confidentiality Form
- Appendix 4: Ethical Approval
- Appendix 5: HDEC Letter of Exemption
List of Tables

Table 3.1 The Inductive Process and Development of the Core Category .........................44
Table 3.2 Example of a Memo ............................................................................................ 45
Table 4.1 Dancing Around the Families: A Grounded Theory of Neonatal Nurses’ Role of
Child Protection .............................................................................................................. 52
Table 5.1 Family/Whānau Type Characteristics and Child Protection Risks .....................87

List of Figures

Figure 3.1 The process of inductive analysis and emerging core categories and the Basic
Social Psychological Process .......................................................................................... 43
Figure 4.1 Overview of Dancing Around the Families .........................................................50