FOR JOANNA

WHO HAS CHANGED OUR LIVES FOREVER

MAY YOUR LIFE BE A CONTINUAL SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM.
MAKING DECISIONS: FOCUSING ON MY BABY'S WELL-BEING

A grounded theory study exploring the way that decisions were made in the midwife-woman relationship.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Midwifery at Massey University

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APRIL 1998
ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a study using a Grounded Theory methodology to explore the way that decisions were made in the midwife-woman relationship. The purpose of this study was to explore the woman's experience of the way that decisions were made, to gain an understanding of it and finally to present a description of the way such decisions were made when women utilised midwife-only care within the New Zealand maternity setting.

Ten women were invited to participate. A diverse sample of women with different birth experiences and from different cultures was obtained. The sample was obtained using the tool of theoretical sampling which highlighted, through data analysis, the need for participants with different characteristics. All women who were interviewed were asked to describe their pregnancy and birth experience, their relationship with their midwife and the way they believed decisions were made during their pregnancy and birth experience.

Data analysis was performed using the constant comparative method. Results showed that women acted in ways to ensure their baby's safety. Women initially acknowledged their pregnancy and as a result, they selected a maternity carer and participated in self education. To ensure their baby's well-being women undertook procedures and followed instructions from their midwife. Whilst they planned for their birth and made decisions that effected themselves and their unborn child, the primary goal behind these actions was their baby's health. The women trusted their midwives to endorse actions that would lead to a safe outcome. At times the women wanted midwives to make decisions for them. Choice, continuity and control are important to women but safety is vital.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When it came time to undertake my thesis I felt that as, with the rest of my degree, I had plenty of time and could foresee no limitations upon myself and therefore planned accordingly. The unforeseen, yet amazing arrival of my daughter changed my plans quite drastically and added a new dimension to being a student. The acknowledgements have changed considerably because of Joanna.

Firstly I would like to thank everyone who helped me throughout this study, be it for advice - what do you think about this? or for baby-sitting. Please accept my heartfelt thanks and know that I really could not have done this without you. Whilst it is not possible to name everyone here, I would like to name those who deserve a special mention.

To the women in the study, thank you for your participation. This final document is testimony to you. Without you, it could not have been produced. Thank you for your understanding of my circumstances as well.

To Ian, thank you for understanding all my moods and temperaments. For sharing your valid thoughts and contributions, computer skills and wisdom. For being here when I needed you.

To all my friends and colleagues in midwifery who have supported and encouraged me to go on; hopefully one day I can return the favour.
To Val. for having faith in my abilities and being an inspiration to midwives.

To my Mum and Dad, who encouraged me to succeed and who have both been fantastic over the past 2 years.

To my supervisor Dr Cheryl Benn, thanks for your patience and guidance, your flexibility and concern throughout this study.

Finally the Award from the Massey University Graduate Research Fund is acknowledged with thanks.
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