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Bonded Caring:
Health Care Choices of
Women with Dependent Children

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Nursing Studies at Massey University.

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Abstract

The question for this study arose from the observation that health care often does not match the client's self-determined needs and desires, and hence is wasted care. As a result, the study proposed to discover what elements are involved when women with dependent children make health care choices and what they want in the way of health care.

The exploratory study was conducted using strategies of grounded theory. Fourteen indepth interviews, involving eleven women, were conducted. The selection of participants and of the questions for the interviews was based on theoretical sampling. Constant comparative analysis and integrative diagramming were used to analyse the data.

The theory that emerged from the data was Bonded Caring and its two essential categories; Interconnectedness and Caring. Bonded Caring requires an intimate and ongoing relationship in which there is development of indepth knowledge of the unique characteristics of the person(s) involved. It is characterised by a strong and enduring affective quality, and by concern, worry and serious attention to the needs of the person(s) involved. This concern necessitates the gathering of information about the nature of the needs, and making the best possible choices concerning their management.

During this search for knowledge and skills needed to carry out health care, women assess their own knowledge and experience; the level(s) of health care needed by each individual; the availability, competence and expected response of the resource person or health care consultant; the perception of risk associated with a health concern; and the family's culture and life style. The women considered these elements within a structural framework of finite material and personal resources. The women juggled the distribution of these resources in a way that allowed them to select the avenues of health care that provided the best degree of safety and protection of development within the context of their circumstances.

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