

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.

**BECOMING BETTER BUT DIFFERENT:**

**A GROUNDED THEORY OF WOMEN'S  
RECOVERY FROM HYSTERECTOMY  
FOLLOWING EARLY DISCHARGE FROM  
HOSPITAL.**

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

**Glennis Birks  
1995.**

618.1453  
Bir

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this grounded theory study was to identify, describe, and generate a theoretical explanation of the experiences of women following early discharge from hospital, as they recovered from hysterectomy. Ten women participated in the study and provided the major source of data. The women, who had undergone surgery within the previous twelve months and who were discharged within five days of having surgery, were interviewed up to three times at four to eight week intervals.

Constant comparative analysis of the data eventuated in the identification of a core category, 'becoming better but different'. This is the process engaged in by women following early discharge from hospital in order to recover from the surgery and feel improved health and a sense of transformation. To accomplish this, the women actively sought to regain control of their lives and their bodies following early discharge from hospital. They felt personally responsible for their recovery and actively participated in making it happen. It is through becoming better but different that women achieve a sense of closure or recovery from the experience of having a hysterectomy. It is a multifaceted process and includes the intertwined and simultaneously occurring phases of 'assimilation', 'achieving harmony', and 'repaterning'.

The process of becoming better but different is proposed as a possible conceptual model for nursing practice and emphasises the need the women in this study felt to be 'done with' and not 'done to'. Understanding of this process by nurses will enhance the way nurses prepare women for discharge from hospital and provide care following discharge after hysterectomy. Knowledge of the process of becoming better but different may provide the opportunity for creative ways of practising and may provide the means of defining and making nursing practice visible. The consequent implications for practice, education, and research are discussed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This researcher was privileged to share the experience of their recovering from hysterectomy following early discharge from hospital, with the women who participated in this research. My sincere thanks to you all for your enthusiastic participation and your willingness to share with me, a very personal experience.

I have appreciated the experience, wisdom, and commitment of Dr Valerie Fleming who has worked with me as thesis supervisor. A very special thank you for your guidance, sensitivity and sense of humour.

Appreciation is extended to the faculty of the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Massey University, for providing a supportive and stimulating environment.

Special acknowledgment and thanks to Shaun Blake for his assistance and vision with the graphics for this research.

I feel very privileged to have a loving and supportive family. My love and heartfelt thanks go to Kevin, Alistair, Katherine, and Sarah who have consistently encouraged and sustained me.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Purpose and Context of the Study</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Aim of the Study</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Significance of the Study</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Study Questions</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Structure of the Thesis</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Recovery from Hysterectomy</b>	<b>5</b>
Sources of Information for Women	5
Other Sources of Information	8
<b>Early Discharge</b>	<b>10</b>
Managing Early Discharge by Clients	11
Nursing Interventions for Early Discharge	13
<b>Hormone Replacement Therapy</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>16</b>

<b>3. DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Research Design</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>19</b>
Setting for the Study	19
Access to the Field	20
Participant Selection	20
Ethical Considerations	21
Data Collection Methods	22
Profile of Study Participants	24
<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>24</b>
Coding	25
Categorising	25
Emergence of the Core Category	27
<b>Trustworthiness of the Data</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4. THE CONTEXT</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Personal History</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Social Context</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Expectations and Reality</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>5. ONE WOMAN'S STORY</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Preoperative History</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Hospitalisation</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Discharge Planning</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Managing after Discharge</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Recovering</b>	<b>45</b>

<b>6. ASSIMILATION</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Taking Responsibility for Making Decisions</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Assuming Control</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Sorting the Information</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Attitudes</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Tangible and Ongoing Improvement</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Back to Normal</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>7. ACHIEVING HARMONY</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Mind/Body</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Achieving Balance</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Deciding</b>	<b>69</b>
<b>Independence</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Control</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Expectation and Reality</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Not thinking About It</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>8. REPATTERNING</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Increased Awareness</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Increased Freedom</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Life Review</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Balanced Perspective</b>	<b>86</b>

<b>9. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>The Process of Becoming Better But Different</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>Becoming Better But Different</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Integration of Findings with the Literature</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Conclusion and Recommendations</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Limitations of the Study</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Implications for Practice</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Implications for Education</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Implications for Research</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
<b>1. Information for Prospective Participants</b>	<b>101</b>
<b>2. Consent to Participate in Research Project</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>103</b>