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Women in Multiple Roles: Study and Motherhood Combined

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research project aimed to explore the experiences of women who were actively involved in both studying and motherhood roles. Interviews were conducted with twelve women who were involved in formal tertiary study, either on a full-time or part-time basis, and had a pre-school aged child. One semi-structured in-depth interview was conducted with each woman over a three month period. Interviews were audiotaped, transcribed and later analysed using thematic analysis practices.

Through analysing the experiences of these women, eight organising themes arose signifying areas of importance to the participants. The eight themes described how their children influenced their decision to study at this time in their lives, what they personally derive from their role as student, their satisfaction and difficulties with childcare, the support they receive from both family and friends, the benefits they experience from combining these roles, the spillover experienced from combining these roles, the impact they believe this has on their children and their own health and well-being and the feelings of support they experienced from other students in similar circumstances.

The common view shared by these women is that although occupying multiple roles does indeed bring additional stressors and strains to their daily lives, it also provides rewards which would not be enjoyed through each role individually.

Suggestions are presented from which tertiary institutions can work to further assist and accommodate the changing nature and needs of their student population, namely women with young children.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Women have been involved in education throughout history, however their degree of involvement, and their justifications for doing so have changed dramatically over the last century. The 1876 Education Act, in which fathers lost the rights over their children's labour and access to knowledge, helped lay the foundations for greater freedom for women and children, whose previous social contacts were confined to their households, their kin and their churches (Toynbee, 1995). New Zealand as a country has appeared to take a keen interest in the lives of women, their place in society and the social world. For example, in 1893 New Zealand women were the first in the world to be given the opportunity to vote in national elections, and had some of the earliest successes in education. Kate Millington Edger became the first New Zealand woman to graduate from university in 1877, and in doing so became only the second woman in the Commonwealth to achieve such a feat (Fry, 1985). The first woman Bachelor of Arts graduate, and the first woman Honours graduate in the British Empire were also New Zealanders (Toynbee, 1995). It is commonly acknowledged that these pioneering women of education were participating in a narrow range of subject areas, for reasons other than the development of a future career. Education was regarded less in terms of the gateway to a career for women, but more as a desirable attribute of a middle-class wife, with economic independence being a nonexistent ambition.

Today the gender gap in higher education has been reduced in terms of participation, access to what were once considered 'prestige subjects,' higher success and course completion rates. As cited in Wisker (1996), a 1985 National Advisory Board report in Great Britain noted the potential value of increasing opportunities for women in education, stating: "we wish to encourage greater participation by women in higher education. We believe that it is important particularly in the scientific and technological areas, that the country should seek to use to the full all the talents of the whole population, and not merely the male half." Hornosty (1998) argues that many educational institutions do not fully understand, nor

appreciate, the changing face of their student population. The increase in the number of female students, especially those who also have both family and career responsibilities, provides a challenge to the traditional academic system. Hornosty (1998) also argues that in order to treat men and women equally in the field of academia, it is essential to acknowledge and subsequently accommodate their differences. 'Universities must therefore change, and continue to change to better accommodate their [students] diverse needs and to better enable their success, restructuring their provision to enable women students to combine family life with study' (Wisker, 1996).

For women students with young children, childcare is often an issue representing great frustration and dissatisfaction. So much so that Hornosty (1998) has stated that without adequate childcare facilities women cannot and will not be able to achieve educational equality. Many researchers have reported that society generally places the responsibility of childcare, including both the provision of childcare and the making of arrangements for childcare, with the mother (Campbell & Campbell, 1994; Greenstein, 2000; Apparala, Reifman, & Munsch, 2003). It is this common assumption that adds to the pressures already facing women wanting to combine motherhood with other 'outside' roles. Indeed the provision of on-campus childcare by the institutions themselves can alleviate some of the problems associated with combining motherhood with tertiary study, however not all. Many of the difficulties surrounding the issue of childcare represent themselves as cost, waiting lists, inflexible hours, and the limited number of hours for which childcare is available. Hornosty (1998) asserts that 'access to quality and affordable childcare will reduce some of the stress for women with young children,' however she goes on to state that more 'broadly based societal change is also required, namely that men must be encouraged to take a larger share of responsibility for parenting and childcare.'

The role of housekeeper is one of the most traditional roles attributed to women. It is both time consuming and hard to relinquish. Taking responsibility for the household tasks appears to go hand in hand with being female, and has therefore become somewhat of a gender role expectation. Repeatedly studies show that women perform far more tasks within the home than men. According to Dempsey (1997) "women are more likely to

perform multiple tasks simultaneously: to be cooking the family's evening meal, dressing one young child and disciplining another." Dempsey (1997) goes on to say that today, despite a larger proportion of wives sharing equally in important decisions, and enjoying similar opportunities and resources for leisure as their husbands, significant differences still remain. For example, various studies over the years have consistently shown that women spend at least twice as much time, if not more, than men on domestic duties (Berk, 1985; Greenstein, 2000; Stevens, Kiger, & Riley, 2001). Dempsey (1997) noted that if a woman was in paid work they were putting in about 70 percent of the time given to housework and childcare, and probably around 80 percent if they were not in paid work. It is also important to note that women are still carrying out qualitatively different tasks to their husbands. "In their totality, women's unpaid tasks remain more regular, repetitive, tedious and constraining of outside activities than men's unpaid tasks" (Dempsey, 1997). Such findings lead one to what Greenstein (2000) has termed the fundamental question: "why, in the face of dramatic changes in women's employment and earnings, household work remains women's work."

Many researchers suggest that an increase in men's participation in domestic work would have a positive impact on the well-being and mental health of women who are mothers of young children, and women who occupy multiple roles (Des Rivieres-Pigeon, Saurel-Cubizolles & Romito, 2002). While past generations of women organised their lives primarily to meet family-related objectives, many women today are interested in meeting both personal and career objectives, with parenthood no longer viewed as a culturally sanctioned deterrent to working outside the home (Killien & Brown, 1987). While currently little literature exists that focuses exclusively on women combining the roles of studying and motherhood, much research has been done focusing on women's increased role in the labour market. For example Miller (1996) stated that in the United States of America 'within the last three decades, mothers' participation in the labour force has steadily increased, with the greatest increase noted among mothers of infants and children under 3, with more than 53% of mothers returning to their employment during the first year postpartum.' For many women returning to the labour force, paid work is merely an addition, and not a substitution for their other responsibilities (Killien & Brown, 1987).

According to Hirsch & Rapkin (1986) the principal burden of multiple roles seems to fall disproportionately on women. At this time researchers have been unable to arrive at a firm agreement on whether combining parenting with other demanding roles, such as employment or study, is detrimental or beneficial to women's physical and psychological health (Miller, 1996). While some researchers propose that multiple role women, such as working mothers, experience a multitude of responsibilities that can be overwhelming and may adversely affect their well-being, others have found that most mothers feel that the benefits of combining these roles outweigh the risks to their well-being. Various other researchers have suggested that it is not merely the various roles women may combine that determine the outcome to their health and well-being, but perhaps the order in which these roles were assumed or the context in which they participate in these roles (Waldron, Weiss & Hughes, 1998). It has therefore been suggested by Facione (1994) that it is the subjective experience of one's multiple roles rather than the amount of labour associated with the roles that mediates the effect on health. It is for this reason researchers such as Rankin (1993) highlight the importance of understanding mothers' perceptions of the sources of stress, and the rewards that serve to mediate the factors of such stress, and therefore the outcome and effect on health and well-being.

The foundations for this research project grew from my own involvement in multiple roles, namely wife, income earner and student, and my increasing interest in embarking on the journey of motherhood. Throughout my time at university I met and befriended many female students juggling the demands of studying with caring for young children. While I enjoyed a relatively low level of responsibility in my own roles, I came to see that these women were continuously involved in, and continuously managing, their diverse array of roles. This thesis is intended to provide an increased sense of understanding to both myself and to the women participants involved regarding the experience of combining the multiple roles of study and motherhood.

1.2 AIMS

It was the intention of this study to explore the experiences of women students who occupy various multiple roles, focusing primarily on that of student and mother of preschool aged children. This study will describe the context of their participation, draw attention to their motivations, desires and difficulties, and explore the implications of such to their personal well-being and family life. It is the intent of this study to provide an opportunity for these women to give expression to their experiences, to further our understanding, while at the same time enabling them to make sense of their own experiences.

1.3 DEFINITIONS

1.3.1 STUDY

For the purpose of this research project, study refers to any tertiary level course being completed at an educational institution, either on a fulltime or part-time basis.

1.3.2 MOTHERHOOD

Of interest in this research project is motherhood of pre-school age children, that is children between 0-5 years.

1.3.3 DIVISION OF LABOUR

Division of labour is to refer to the 'unpaid' work carried out within the home, referring to both domestic duties such as cooking and cleaning, and childcare, the provision of childcare and the arranging of childcare.

1.3.4 MULTIPLE ROLES

Roles can be defined as ‘any pattern of behaviour involving certain rights, obligations and duties for which an individual is expected, trained and, indeed, encouraged to perform in a given situation’ (Reber, 1995). As such multiple roles pertains to the occupation of several ‘roles’ at any given point in time.

1.3.5 HEALTH & WELL-BEING

The World Health Organisation (2003) defines health as a state of “complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” For the purposes of this research project health and well-being are regarded in their most general sense, with attention directed towards the participant’s own personal understanding of these terms.

1.4 SUMMARY

Given the continuously changing nature of women’s participation in society, namely their increased involvement in both education and the workforce, it becomes fundamental to investigate the interactions between the private and public spheres of these women’s lives, to better our understanding and their own. Given the abundance of literature surrounding working mothers, it was believed important that attention should be given to women who have decided to add yet another role to their already busy schedule, that of study. Further justification for the following research can be found in the literature surrounding the impact of multiple roles on one’s health and well-being, which suggests the possibility of both beneficial and detrimental outcomes. This study was intended to examine the experiences of women as they navigate and manage their multiple roles, specifically that of student and mother. As noted it is commonly reported that society places the responsibility of children with the mother, as well as responsibility for domestic duties and family coordination. Therefore, what is of interest in this research project are the personal accounts of women

who fulfil these roles. It is expected that the accounts of those involved will differ, as women participate in their roles under different constraints and contexts. It is this, along with the effects of multiple role occupancy on health and well-being, which was to be explored.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION – WOMEN IN EDUCATION

It has been said by David, Davies, Edwards, Reay & Standing (1996) that academia does not bode well with feminist's ways of working, which are about collaboration and the dismantling of hierarchies, the very foundation upon which higher education is built. Edwards (1993) stated that since the nineteenth century feminists have focused on education and entry to higher education as fulfilling a right to intellectual development. Edwards also noted that the fight for admission to universities was based, for at least some, on the premise that education would give women the opportunity to access the professions, and gain economic independence. Friedan (1965) stated that in the 1960's, at the beginning of the second wave of feminism, higher education for women was seen as the solution to the isolation and dissatisfaction felt by suburban housewives who were immersed in the private sphere, namely their marital and mothering roles. In following years, feminists have voiced concern over women's continuing relatively poor access to the higher levels of educational institutions, and their poor representation in the prestige subjects. Stacey & Price (1981) stated that "education has been one of the few resources that women have been able to use to free themselves from the constraints of the traditional role."

Throughout the early twentieth century a woman's reasons for participating in tertiary study were not necessarily viewed as a step towards a career, nor economic independence. Toynbee (1995) stated it was most likely that for young women during this time, 'university education was seen as a respectable option to remaining at home, which at the same time would provide a good (but not too) liberal education and enhance the chance of finding a 'suitable' marriage partner.' While women were not officially prevented from attending university, they experienced strong opposition, and were not always admitted into degree courses (Fry, 1985). This however did not deter women from entering university institutions, and by 1914 over one third of graduates from Canterbury (a College of the University of New Zealand) were women (Toynbee, 1995). In 1971 female students represented 29.8% of all students participating at the tertiary level, in 1987 this figure rose

to 47.1%, and in 1997 this figure increased yet again to 55.1% (Statistics New Zealand, 1999). Initially, female tertiary students were most highly represented within the university institutions. In 1991 55% of all female enrolments were at university, while in 1997 this figure dropped to 48.6% as female participation at polytechnics and colleges of education increased (Statistics New Zealand, 1999). Despite the number of female enrolments for polytechnics and colleges of education increasing, female university enrolments still prevailed, and today participation rates of women are now higher than those of men at every institution (Statistics New Zealand, 1999). The promotion of extramural study is believed to have greatly facilitated this growth in female enrolments, with more women than men choosing to study extramurally (Statistics New Zealand, 1993).

As the participation level of women increases further, female students are taking advantage of both undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. This process has been described by Statistics New Zealand (1993) as the “catching up” process, “taking advantage of the fact that within the last few decades many of the gender disparities previously existing in education have been eliminated.” In 1993 it was stated by Statistics New Zealand that within New Zealand it had been European/Pakeha women who had so far gained the most from this process, although Maori women too, had made considerable progress in education. In 1999 however, a similar report put out by Statistics New Zealand stated that in the interim 5 years Maori women had made the greatest gains proportionally in participation and attainment within tertiary institutions.

The growing prevalence of women in tertiary education has had a profound impact on the availability of subject choices and the corresponding curricula (Wisker, 1996). Historically, women have been concentrated in a narrow range of subject choices, ones that typically reflected the gender stereotype of a woman’s ability and desire to nurture, and ones in which it would be possible to combine the particular roles of wife and mother with future employment, namely the arts, teaching, nursing, social sciences and education (Statistics New Zealand, 1993; Hornosty, 1998). Today however, women are increasingly being seen in fields once regarded as ‘male preserves.’ According to Statistics New Zealand (1993) women have substantially increased their representation among dentistry, architecture,

commerce, management studies, science and medicine, and have become the majority of those studying veterinary science and law.

This advancement of women into higher education has challenged the traditional model of what constitutes a student, and how they participate in university life. Younes and Asay (1998) stated that the 'traditional graduate student is one who is totally focused on graduate study, with little outside interference.' Hornosty (1998) has also endorsed this notion advising the traditional definition of a single scholar is one "who is able to devote all of *his* time and energy to academic pursuits." With the arrival of women with children and family responsibilities academic institutions are presented with a challenge to the traditional model (Hornosty, 1998). As a result, such institutions may be out of touch with the changing needs of their students. For adult education providers to truly benefit adult students, consideration must be given to the adult student's life as a whole, to better accommodate their diverse needs and better enable their success (Wisker, 1996; Younes & Asay, 1998).

The needs of women students are wide and varied, reflecting what Wisker (1996) describes as women representing a 'heterogeneous group.' They range from those who have no formal qualifications at all, who need basic education and training as well as confidence-building, to well-qualified women managing a career break and wishing to update or retrain before returning to work after, perhaps, bringing up a family (Wisker, 1996). The notion of 'women as a heterogeneous group' also holds true in regard to why women have entered into tertiary study. It may be the natural progression following secondary school, or the first opportunity to participate in a formal education. For other women, it may represent a desire to improve existing qualifications by moving into postgraduate study, or perhaps it is purely for self-fulfilment.

Studies have shown the advancement of women into higher education is fraught with barriers and difficulties, including that of relationships with spouses, partners, friends, work colleagues and family (Coser, 1974; Edwards, 1993; Younes and Asay, 1998). For example, Edwards (1993) found there existed three main threats which commonly caused

conflict within the marital relationships of studying women. These threats were identified as: 'the partner's desire to have the home as a separate, private and unconnected sphere, the partner's fear of losing their central place in the women's attentions including the feeling that the time the women spent studying was taken away from them, and finally, the partner's fear of the women's educational success and the potential ramifications of this in terms of independence' (Edwards, 1993). It was further suggested by Edwards (1993) that some men felt threatened by the increased knowledge gained by their wives who were studying social sciences – especially in relation to male motivations. It was in all these areas that Edwards (1993) suggested power battles were played out between the women and their partners.

Younes and Asay (1998) observed that relationships with friends may become strained as they do not fully appreciate the circumstances and pressures facing a female graduate student. It was also found by Younes and Asay (1998) that employers and colleagues often held a sense of resentment towards women juggling work and study. Whether it be due to the potential gaining of a higher position, the re-scheduling of meetings to meet the demands of juggling multiple roles, or the unwillingness of colleagues to help with the workload when role overload occurred, such resistance can be experienced. Younes and Asay (1998) proposed that a women's dual commitment to self and career advancement directly threatens their commitment to their family, and therefore causes them to feel 'torn between two worlds.' For as Coser (1974) termed "families are greedy institutions - requiring [of women] their constant allegiance and availability to cater to all [their] physical and emotional needs." As such it was stated by Wisker (1996) that "universities should be required to consider restructuring their provision to enable women students to combine family life with study."

Hornosty (1998) noted that by comparing campus life today to that in the 1960's a number of differences would be seen to exist. The most obvious is the increased number of women on campus, and the increase in the availability of courses at the undergraduate level focusing on women's experiences and issues of concern to women.' Despite these apparent changes there remain some important systemic and institutional barriers to women's full

and equal participation in university life. Hornosty (1998) suggests that women's primary responsibility for childcare, coupled with inadequate childcare facilities at an institutional level, as well as inflexible course completion dates, inadequate childbirth leave and parental leave systems, limits the level of equality attainable for women students today.

2.2 WOMEN STUDENTS AS MOTHERS

Younes and Asay (1998) argue that as a whole, the adult student population of today, regardless of gender, do not seem to reduce or drop other roles to fulfil that of the student. Instead, the duty of the student is seen as another role in need of being managed on a daily basis. This is especially so for women students with preschool aged children. The presumption that mothers are primarily responsible for the childcare arrangements of their children, and for the coordination of family member's needs and requirements, even when there is a spouse, partner or other parent present, is a prevalent societal norm. As David et al. (1996) explained, while mothers are generally viewed as free to choose whether or not they go out to work [or study], if they do so they must deal with the consequences as a private responsibility. This notion was illustrated in a study by Edwards (1993) in that although the women continued to complete a disproportionate share of the household duties, they regarded the domestic division of labour in their homes as reasonable, as they saw the educational responsibilities as their decision and therefore in addition to their family responsibilities. Boulton (1983) argued that "middle-class women's material resources appear to allow them time and freedom for other interests apart from domestic life which, when they try to pursue them, are blocked by the inherent restrictions of motherhood as institutionalised in our society." Clearly, women's lives are affected not only by the roles they assume, but also by the sequence and combination in which they assume those roles (Killien & Brown, 1987). It is therefore important to realise that women students who are mothers to young children do not make their choices, such as that of returning to study or childcare arrangements, under the same conditions or circumstances. Mothers do not all live in the same areas, they do not all have the same support networks, nor the same levels of income on which to rely. Consequently, the

differing contexts in which mothers make decisions means not all mothers are making the same decisions; such differing contexts also mean that the preferred choice is not always available to women (David et al., 1996).

In reviewing the literature surrounding childcare arrangements of preschool aged children, it becomes evident that some of the major difficulties faced by studying mothers are the cost and limited hours during which childcare is available. In New Zealand in 1998, 87% of all preschool age children had some form of formal childcare arrangements, and 15% of all mothers were partaking in some form of study or training (Labour Market Policy Group, 1999). It was found that of these mothers, 36% reported a change in childcare arrangements had affected their studies. It is important to note that difficulties with childcare are not limited to solo mothers as is commonly believed. While 21% of solo mothers had problems accessing childcare due to their studies, so too did 12% of mothers from two parent families (Labour Market Policy Group, 1999). The reasons given for not accessing childcare by studying mothers were wide and varied, including cost, lack of informal care by someone known and trusted, lack of suitable or flexible hours of childcare, a general lack of local services, lack of age appropriate services, transport difficulties, waiting lists, and a lack of quality programmes or services (Labour Market Policy Group, 1999). It is the opinion of some researchers that universities by and large have failed to address the issue of childcare adequately, what they describe as a form of 'systemic discrimination against women' (Hornosty, 1998).

Of concern in Canadian Universities, is the lack of maternity leave provisions, the loss of funding and various university privileges if a female student took time out to have children, and the limits set on the timeframe within which to complete a degree (Hornosty, 1998). These issues provide testimony to the enduring notion that women are unable to attain educational and employment equality. In order to treat men and women fairly, existing differences must be acknowledged and accommodated for, namely the changing role of women in the care of the family, one where family is one of the many roles undertaken. It is Hornosty's (1998) belief that universities as a whole have been slow to recognise that without adequate childcare facilities women are not able to achieve educational, and

therefore employment, equity. “Without daycare, students who are also mothers find it difficult to participate in both the formal (classroom, computer and library time) and informal (peer and faculty social activities, informal discussions, attendance at special lectures, workshops, extra-curricular activities) dimensions of their education” (Canadian Association of University Teachers, 1986, cited in Hornosty, 1998). Perhaps as a result of the acknowledgement of this, campaigns for nurseries and crèches have been among the most prominent campaigns of students unions since the 1960’s (Silver and Silver, 1997).

Prummer (2000) acknowledges the counter view that the domestic division of labour, including childcare responsibility, belongs to the private sphere of student’s private lives, and therefore might be considered beyond the legitimate reach of institutional interference. In saying this however, Prummer recognises that such responsibilities profoundly affect women student’s ability to enter programmes of further education, and their chances of pursuing a course continuously and completing a degree successfully. Prummer therefore suggests that “although these factors cannot (and should not) be directly influenced by the university, the institution nevertheless can (and should) take measures to make it easier for women to come to terms with problems of incompatibility.” Such measures would include: more flexible opening times and times for tutorials and counselling, help with the care of children or infirm relatives (either through the provision of facilities or through financial support), and providing students with the means to set up support networks, study groups and other forms of contact (Prummer, 2000).

2.3 DIVISION OF LABOUR WITHIN THE HOME

Thirty years ago, Oakley (1974) noted that ‘despite a reduction of gender differences in the occupational world, the occupational role of the housewife is one that remains entirely feminine.’ More recently, Allen & Hawkins (1999) state that “despite dramatic changes in women’s political rights, economic privileges and work patterns, their responsibility for maintaining the home and caring for the children remained basically the same.” The degree of a woman’s domestic involvement, and consequential responsibility, is most commonly

referred to as the 'division of labour.' The division of labour within the home refers to both domestic duties, such as cleaning, cooking, washing, and childcare, including the provision of childcare and making arrangements for childcare (Des Rivieres-Pigeon, Saurel-Cubizolles & Romito, 2002). Beckett (1997) observed that two thirds to three quarters of household work in developed regions is performed by women. Beckett noted that in most countries women spend 30 hours or more on housework each week, while men spend around 10-15 hours. This pattern is replicated in numerous research studies, leaving what Greenstein (2000) termed the fundamental question: 'why, given that the last 15 years have seen dramatic changes in higher education participation and labour force participation of women, does housework remain women's work?' The consensus of empirical literature is that the division of labour tends to be relatively traditional (Greenstein, 2000). The kinds of household tasks that wives and husbands perform differ, remaining highly segregated by sex. While women primarily do tasks that traditionally have been thought of as 'women's work' (such as cooking, laundry and housecleaning), men primarily do 'male tasks' (such as yard work and auto maintenance) (Greenstein, 2000).

In efforts to explain this gender driven phenomenon, researchers have developed four perspectives which are reviewed by Greenstein (2000). The first is the relative resources approach, stating that the division of labour within a home is a result of negotiation between spouses over inputs (such as income) and outcomes (such as who does the housework). Under this approach, one would assume that as a result of women's recent increase in labour force participation, and corresponding increase in personal income, their level of housework involvement would decrease. This however is not reflected in the majority of literature. The second approach is the time availability perspective, implying that there should be an association between the number of hours a wife works outside the home and the number of hours she spends doing domestic work. However, although the empirical literature suggests that employed wives do spend a decreased amount of time involved in housework, such decreases are not proportional to the amount of time spent in outside-paid employment. The third approach is gender ideology. Gender ideologies are "how a person identifies oneself with regard to marital and family roles, traditionally linked to gender" (Greenstein, 2000). Marriage and other intimate relationships provide arenas in

which these ideologies are played out, providing an opportunity for husbands and wives to behave in ways that validate their identities as either male or female, and husband or wife. Under this perspective, division of labour would be more likely to be equitable where both the wife and husband hold non-traditional (egalitarian) gender ideologies. The final approach is that of economic dependency. According to the economic dependency approach, wives are more likely to be economically dependent on their husbands, therefore wives can be expected to allocate more time to domestic work, than can their breadwinning husbands. Greenstein (2000) however observed that breadwinner wives tended to do more housework than would be predicted under the economic dependency model, but that dependent husbands actually did less, suggesting different processes operate for husbands and wives.

A further attempt to explain the division of labour within the home is given by Allen & Hawkins (1999) who developed the idea of “maternal gatekeeping.” They suggest that while other approaches, such as those discussed above, provide partial validity they do not explain why wives continue to do a larger share of family work, despite paid employment outside the home. Maternal gatekeeping is defined as having three dimensions: 1) mothers’ reluctance to relinquish responsibility over family matters by setting rigid standards, 2) external validation of a mothering identity, and 3) differentiated conceptions of family roles. They go on to describe maternal gatekeeping as a set of beliefs and behaviours that ultimately inhibit a more mutual effort between men and women within the home by limiting men’s opportunities for learning through caring for both their home and children. They argue that while many fathers want to increase the amount of time spent caring for their home and children, structural, cultural, familial and personal barriers exist to prevent this (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Researchers suggest that while many mothers and wives have expressed dissatisfaction with family work arrangements and wish for father’s increased participation, in practice both men and women resist more paternal involvement (Coltrane, 1989; Mainardi, 1993). Allen & Hawkins (1999) assert that women show such resistance by displaying an unwillingness to relinquish responsibility for the care of both home and family, assuming both high standards and their husband’s subsequent lack of willingness and skills. It is such ‘negative maternal beliefs and expectations about fathers’

participation that discourage men from taking responsibility for family work, and further encourages mothers to manage, set standards, and regulate attempts by their partners to collaborate in family work' (Schipani, 1994, cited in Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Importance is also placed on the value women bestow on the outcomes of performing household tasks. Kranichfeld (1987, cited in Allen & Hawkins, 1999) maintains that women value being able to influence the internal, domestic domain. This view is supported by LaRossa (1997) who affirms mothers hesitate to share family work as they enjoy the authority, privilege, and status their position gives them in the family. Consequently, women may hesitate to relinquish their responsibility for family work, for if they were to do so they may also lose valued outcomes from doing family work (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Allen & Hawkins (1999) are careful to note that parental involvement is 'multiply determined,' that no single predictor exerts a predominant influence, rather that maternal gatekeeping is likely to be one in a constellation of variables that influences father's involvement in family work.

According to Pittman & Solheim (1996) what is missing from both theory and method in research on the allocation of housework, is the notion that housework may be actively negotiated among couples on a continuous daily basis, that time allocations depend on concurrent experiences, such as stress, occurring at the time of the decisions being made. Pittman & Solheim (1996) assert that stress operates as a driver of the allocation of housework, with the stressors of the work place and school being transferred to the home situation. This can differ from day to day thus confirming that the allocation of housework is not a static entity within the home.

While household tasks traditionally viewed as feminine share the characteristics of being performed daily and at specific times, allowing little choice regarding when the task should be done, tasks traditionally defined as masculine also have a set of common characteristics regarding their nature. According to Meissner (1977, cited in Blair & Johnson, 1992) tasks viewed as masculine tend to have the following qualities: a) a well-defined beginning and end, b) personal discretion as to when the task should be performed, and c) a leisure component within the task. Such segregation in the nature of household tasks, and its effects on perceptions of fairness were illustrated by Benin & Agostinelli (1988) who stated

that women are relatively unaffected by increased household labour participation on the part of husbands unless the labour is specifically spent in those tasks traditionally defined as “feminine” chores. Two such chores include cooking and cleaning, these tasks share the characteristics of being needed to be performed daily, with little regard to a women’s actual desire to perform them, consequently affecting a women’s sense of fairness towards the distribution of household chores.

According to Thompson (1991) a women’s sense of fairness with regard to the division of household labour is affected by three factors 1) outcomes, 2) comparisons, and 3) justifications. ‘Most women do not find the physical activities of family work enjoyable or fulfilling, they experience the tasks as tiresome, menial, mindless, repetitive, and lonely’ (Berheide, 1984, cited in Thompson, 1991., Ferree, 1987, cited in Thompson, 1991). However while most mothers do not value the tasks of family work per se, they do value aspects of family work, for example the interpersonal (relationship) outcomes of family work.

While outcome values reflect what one desires, comparisons reflect what one feels they deserve (Thompson, 1991). While women will compare the division of labour within their homes between herself and her husband (between-gender comparisons), researchers such as Major (1987) and LaRossa (1988, cited in Thompson, 1991) have stated that it is also common for women to engage in within-gender comparisons. These comparisons with other women lead to the development of a strong sense of entitlement about family work (Thompson, 1991). That is to say women recognise the different inputs both herself and her husband make to their family and family work and base their perceptions on the division of household work accordingly. This is perhaps one explanation to the finding in many studies that not all women report unfairness (Pleck, 1985).

Thompson (1991) notes that there are gender-specific excuses and justifications for both men’s and women’s contributions to family work. For example LaRossa & LaRossa (1981) state that it is acceptable for fathers, but not for mothers, to say that their wage work keeps them from their children, and that they are impatient or incompetent in childcare.

McKee (1982, cited in Thompson, 1991) proposes further justifications utilised by fathers as inexperience, tiredness, clumsiness, squeamishness. Justifications for women's primary role in the division of household chores have also been reported, including 'she has more time available for family work, more talent for it, and derives more pleasure doing it' (Komter, 1989, cited in Thompson, 1991). Hochschild (1990) proposed the justification that 'wives have a greater need than do their husbands for clean clothes, a clean house and elaborate meals.' It is believed that women often accept their husband's justifications because they appreciate that they have talked and consulted with them, believing that they have discussed, and decided, together what the division of labour within their home will be (Thompson, 1991).

2.4 MULTIPLE ROLES AND HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Whilst there are relatively few studies examining studying and motherhood a great deal of literature currently exists surrounding women returning to the workforce with young children. Typically women have shown discontinuity in their labour force attachment because they spend time out of paid work to care for children (Macran, Joshi & Dex, 1996). These authors note that in post-war times women have seldom rejected motherhood for a career; neither do they tend to abandon a career for motherhood. During the last four decades the participation of women with young children in the paid work force has increased steadily. The reason behind this increase is believed to lie in the fact that for the majority of women the gap between leaving employment to become a mother and subsequent return is shorter, and that employment between births has become more common. Therefore the greatest increases in women's work force participation have been seen in women with children under the age of three, with the majority of women returning to, or entering, the workforce within their first year postpartum (Miller, 1996). The availability of part-time employment outside the home, has in part contributed to, and enabled, such growth, with part-time work being utilised by many mothers of pre-school aged children as a common strategy to manage work and childcare responsibilities (Fox-Folk & Beller, 1993). This recognition of the need to 'manage' aspects of their various

roles illustrates the common finding that when a mother participates in paid employment outside the home, she does so in addition to her other, equally demanding roles (Killien & Brown, 1987).

One of the common themes of research in the area of women partaking in multiple roles is the effect of such behaviour on women's health and well-being. Weber (1999) suggests that mothers can experience a multitude of responsibilities that can be overwhelming and may adversely affect their health and well-being, and the well-being of the entire family. She notes that definitions of well-being have been nonexistent or, at the very best vague, for example White (1992) defined well-being as 'perceived life satisfaction and health.' Studies such as Weber's, involving full time working mothers with at least one pre-school aged child, have reported on what the term well-being means to such women. When mothers were asked what well-being means, most expressed feelings of happiness along with joy, winning and an absence of guilt. Well-being was also associated with a sense of hope, this encompassed hope for their children, hope for a new home, hope for building a better future, and hope for new beginnings. Importance was also given to perceptions of self worth and notions of providing role models to their children.

Given the highly subjective nature of personal well-being it is important to explore and understand the perceptions of well-being as experienced by women occupying multiple roles. Younes and Asay (1998) stated that stress in graduate school has been related to poor academic performance, coping problems, poor family relations and the dropping out of graduate school. However, the employed women in Weber's study expressed the importance of having close relationships with their spouses for the benefit of the family as a whole, as well as their own personal well-being. This combined with the experiencing of occasional solitude, had mothers stating that the benefits of multiple roles far outweigh the risks to their own well-being. As Weber (1999) commented, the contributions of her study can have meaning not only for employed mothers, but for anyone who seeks to have a better sense of well-being through enhancing their awareness of what well-being means, and how daily lives can be impacted through such perceived well-being.

While past generations of women have primarily organised their lives to meet family-related objectives, many women today are interested in meeting both personal and career objectives (Killien & Brown, 1987). According to Rankin (1993) more than half of all employed women hold multiple roles, leading to multiple responsibilities and stressors, thereby putting them at risk for both physical and psychological health strains. According to Rankin (1993) stress occurs when an individual's perception of an event prompts them to respond or take action, dispersing energy in order to maintain or adapt the self. She goes on to state that while occupying multiple roles, such as that of income earner, mother and wife, may enhance perceived status, increase social contacts, and provide support, the strains of competing expectations and pressure to perform in these roles may lead to role confusion and role conflict, thus taking their toll at the personal and the interpersonal levels. Many detrimental consequences of occupying multiple roles have been noted, for example: decreased self-esteem, increased tension, increased sense of threat, a sense of normlessness, decreased trust of others, self-doubt, withdrawal and feelings of guilt, conflict, ambivalence and dissatisfaction, with the number of illnesses that women experience stated as being a function of the compatibility of their multiple roles (Rankin, 1993).

In her study Rankin identified time, or more importantly the lack of time, as the biggest source of stress identified by multiple role women. This view was also established by Killien & Brown (1987) who state that many women cut down on sleep in order to gain precious hours, not only for task accomplishment, but also to gain private time necessary to a women's well-being. Tingey & Kiger (1996) suggest that a potential cause for the apparent lack of time for oneself is primarily due to women's underlying tendency to give precedence to their family's needs, wants and desires. A further source of stress identified by the mothers in Rankin's study was that of childcare arrangements, and the presence or absence of these. Rankin stated that mothers experienced "intense feelings of obligation, guilt, and frustration over traditional role expectations." Piechowski (1992) also noted childcare arrangements as a source of strain for multiple role women, stating that such strain has been found to be related to mental health outcomes. Of particular relevance to this study is the finding by Van Meter & Agronow (1982) that states that among married

women college students, dissatisfaction with childcare, including the ease or difficulty in arranging childcare, was highly correlated with the role strain of these women.

Throughout the literature it is noted that performing multiple roles does not necessarily lead to the occurrence of strain in everyday life (Baruch, Barnett & Rivers, 1983; Tingey & Kiger, 1996). Multiple responsibilities can have a liberating effect on women by providing opportunities to experience the rewards of economic independence, self-gratification and accomplishment which in turn may offset or mediate the stressfulness of their situation (Rankin, 1993). Roles provide a mechanism for participating in society, and society can provide both monetary and non-monetary rewards for role performances (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1986). Involvement in multiple roles also provides access to numerous arenas of society and their distinguishing perspectives and resources, ultimately increasing the potential for greater coping, increased autonomy and an enriched self structure. Baruch, Barnett & Rivers (1983) found that the highest level of well-being existed among the busiest women in their study, that is those who occupied the multiple roles of income earner, wife and mother, thereby suggesting that multiple social roles are not automatically detrimental to women's psychological well-being. The 'average' women in their sample grew up through the Great Depression and World War 2, and at the time of interviewing were living in both an economic and social climate that allowed for fewer economic pressures, more liberal attitudes towards women, and greater opportunities for women within society, thereby facilitating this outcome. Improvements in self-esteem have also been noted as a benefit of occupying multiple roles. Pietromonaco, Manis & Frohardt-Lane (1986) found that self-esteem was markedly higher for women who held more social roles, more specifically they noted that 'women who worked, had a partner, and one or more children, were students, and engaged in at least one volunteer activity reported the most positive feelings about themselves.' It has been concluded by many researchers that women with more complex multiple roles perceive themselves as happier and report less depressive symptoms (Kandel, Davies & Raveis, 1985; Kopp & Ruzicka, 1993). A potential explanation for this is given by Baruch, Barnett & Rivers (1983) who suggest that multiple roles may allow women to shrug off more easily the least desirable aspect of some of the roles, perhaps by way of paid help and/or on-call support networks, thereby experiencing greater happiness.

As there is no dispute that occupying multiple roles can have both harmful and beneficial effects on physical and psychological health, Waldron, Weiss & Hughes (1998) suggest that it is in fact the combination of roles that determines the net outcome. In their study they found that employment and marriage generally had beneficial or neutral effects on health, while being a mother had beneficial, neutral and harmful effects on health. They identified that the health effects of having children did not differ depending on marital status or employment, suggesting instead that beneficial health effects existed for women who had given birth at older ages, and that harmful effects existed for women who had given birth at younger ages. A further suggestion for the differing effects of multiple roles is made by Hirsch & Rapkin (1986) who state that “although marriage and paid employment together have beneficial outcomes on the average [women], without a doubt there are women for whom the consequences of these multiple role involvements are less benign.” They propose that it is the context of the involvement which defines the consequence, again highlighting the possible impacts of the availability of paid help on the experiencing of well-being. They note that many roles permit considerable behavioural variation, and there are likely to be differences in the reaction of partners, with their responses either validating or casting into doubt the adequacy of role performance, leaving room for considerable individual differences in the satisfaction that is derived from the role. McBride (1990) stated that the stress of multiple roles is eased if the woman’s spouse approves of and supports her choices. Although marriage and parenthood can be sources of great satisfaction and happiness for women, these roles can also bring extreme stress given that despite their increased participation in the work force, women continue to bear the brunt of family responsibilities (Pleck, 1985; Russo, 1990; Gray, Lovejoy, Piotrkowski & Bond, 1990). Piechowski (1992) therefore concluded that there is a close link between how well women cope with multiple role occupation, and how much help they receive from their husbands in term of childcare and housework.

2.5 SUMMARY

The significance and timeliness of this research project is evident given that the number of New Zealand women, from diverse backgrounds, entering into higher education is increasing rapidly. As a result of this, it becomes imperative to examine the interactions between family and education. This study is intended to examine the experiences of women as they navigate and manage their experiences of occupying multiple roles, namely that of student and mother. It is commonly reported that society places the responsibility of children with the mother, as well as responsibility for domestic duties and family coordination. Therefore, what is of interest in this study are the personal accounts of women who fulfil these roles. It is expected that the accounts of those involved will differ, as women partake in these roles under different constraints and contexts. It is this, along with the effects of multiple role occupancy on health and well-being, which is explored.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 METHODOLOGY

To explore the experiences of women in higher education ‘juggling’ multiple roles, including that of student and mother to preschool aged children, I have chosen a qualitative research design informed by feminist research theory. I believed that by selecting a qualitative approach to this research, data would be collected that would allow insight and understanding into the lives of the women involved. As it was my intent to derive meaning from the experiences of these women, I believed feminist research principles, which emphasis the importance and value in understanding and exploring the experiences of women, were most appropriate (Worrell & Etaugh, 1994).

3.2 LOCATION OF SELF WITHIN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Feminist researchers have long stressed the importance of locating themselves within their research, quoting Du Bois (1983) “the closer our subject matter to our own life and experience, the more we can probably expect our own beliefs about the world to enter into and shape our work – to influence the very questions we pose, our conception of how to approach those questions, and the interpretations we generate from our findings.” In my own personal experience, I too have simultaneously occupied the roles of wife, income earner and student. While not currently active in the role of a mother, learning of my own pregnancy during the completion of this project further centred my position within my research.

My initial interest in this topic area arose through the observation of both myself and friends entering into the various stages of our lives, adding diversified roles to our repertoires as we went. In observing the progression from high school, to university, to employment, to marriage and family, it became evident that during this process, few roles, if any, were actually dropped, sparking my interest in women managing multiple roles. For

me personally, the role of student is a dominant one that I have occupied continuously (both fulltime and part-time) over the last seven years. Throughout this time I have met, and married my husband, have lived in different parts of New Zealand, and worked both fulltime and part-time for various employers, all while continuing my study. Since my marriage, my desire to begin our family has developed my interest in motherhood, and the motivations, desires and difficulties that go hand in hand with this. As a consequence of these two dominant areas of my life, my desire to explore the experiences of female students with preschool aged children grew; this research project is the result.

3.3 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING - FEMINIST THEORY

Feminist research has been defined by Wilkinson (1986) as 'research on women and for women, giving priority to female experience and developing theory, which is firmly situated in this experience.' As such feminist research provides the environment and support to create new knowledge and understanding about women's lives. A common focus in the literature of feminist research is understanding and improving on women's lives (Webb, 1993; Stanley & Wise, 1993). As such Crawford & Kimmel (1999) stated that the ultimate aim of feminist research is being able to contribute towards a transformation of gender relations and the gender system. To aid such a contribution Webb (1993) suggested that feminist research be 'concerned with values, that it should focus on women-related research questions, should analyse the conditions of women's lives, should be grounded in actual experiences closely related to social change, and that research findings should be made available to those who have taken part in the research and to women in general, for unless this is done there is little possibility of using the findings in women's personal lives.' A guiding theme identified in the literature is that feminist researchers do more than just collect data, they instead 'create knowledge, make social judgements about the applicability of that knowledge, and advocate for social change beneficial to all women.' (Crawford & Kimmel, 1999) Based on the above criteria for feminist research I hope the knowledge generated from the shared experiences of these women will be relevant to the women

themselves, to other multiple role women, to education and to educational institutions (Webb, 1993).

Feminist researchers acknowledge that research cannot be value free, that objectivity is not always possible, or even desirable (Blackie, 2001). Sarantakos (1996) states that the very nature of qualitative research means objectivity is impossible as objectivity requires that the researcher remains distant from, and neutral to, the research object, the respondents, the methods and techniques of data collection and analysis, and to the findings. These requirements are contradictory to the very nature of both qualitative and feminist research, which instead encourage inter-subjectivity, closeness between the elements of the research and involvement of the researcher in the whole research process. Feminist research methods are inherently characterised by an awareness of the location of the researcher within the research, a form of 'self-disciplined self-reflection on who we are, how our identities influence our work, and how our work influences aspects of self' (Webb, 1993). Through this process of personal reflexivity I have continually acknowledged my place within this research in an effort to reduce possible biases that occur when such self-reflection is not undertaken (Hall & Stevens, 1991; Crawford & Kimmel, 1999).

In their review of sources of feminist thought, Worrell and Etaugh (1994) revealed six guiding themes prominent in feminist research:

- *Challenging the Tenets of Traditional Scientific Inquiry* – Recognising that values enter into all scientific enterprises and that those values should be explicit, emphasizing the researcher as an individual who interacts with participants in meaningful ways that enrich both observer and the observed.
- *Focus on the Experience and Lives of Women* – Valuing women as a legitimate target of study, recognising and exploring the sources of variation among us, exploring research questions that are relevant to women's lives, encouraging research questions that are grounded in personal experiences of women researchers.
- *Viewing Power Relations as the Basis of Patriarchal Political Social Arrangements* – Exploring the dimensions of power as influences on the quality of

women's lives, considering differences among women as mediated by power differentials.

- *Recognising Gender as an Essential Category of Analysis* – Exploring the function of gender in forming expectations and evaluations, recognising gender as a social construction based on power arrangements, emphasising the situational context of gender.
- *Attention to the Use of Language and the Power to “Name”* – Creating public awareness of hidden meanings by identifying and naming them, restructuring language to be inclusive of women, recognising that language frames thought and vice versa.
- *Promoting Social Activism Toward the Goal of Societal Change* – Creating a science that will benefit rather than oppress women, directing personal involvement and action to initiate or support change.

The applicability and appropriateness of feminist research theory to this current project is based on the aim of the research itself which is to explore the experiences of women as they navigate their multiple roles. This study describes the experiences of women who simultaneously occupy the roles of student and mother to pre-school age children. It focuses on their motivations, desires and difficulties in combining these roles, and how these impact their personal health and well-being. This study was intended to provide the women involved with the opportunity to share their experiences and through this process gain an increased understanding of their own roles, and to provide greater knowledge and insight for women and society as a whole. It was also anticipated that the knowledge and understanding created would provide avenues for educational institutions to increase their provisions and support for such women. I hope that the knowledge generated through the shared experiences of these women will help both current and future female students with young children achieve their academic goals.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Feminist research does not have a specific methodology. It is instead dependent upon the research topic in question and what suits the aims and objectives of this. It was therefore deemed appropriate to employ the qualitative methodology of in-depth interviews, which aims toward the exploration of social relations, and describes reality as it is experienced by the respondents (Sarantakos, 1996). It is believed this is a better approach than simply standardised interviews because in-depth interviews encourage subjectivity and intensive dialogue between equals, which are intrinsic features of the feminist analysis of gender experience (Sarantakos, 1996). Among the strengths of utilising semi-structured interviews as the means of data collection is that there exists less chance of misunderstanding between the researcher and the respondents. For as stated by Guba & Lincoln (1981) “questions can be tailored to fit the respondent’s knowledge and degree of involvement, therefore providing for continuous assessment and evaluation of information by the researcher, allowing redirection, probing and summarising.”

It is acknowledged that arguments exist regarding the degree to which the respondent-researcher relationship can be truly equal (Hammersley, cited in Sarantakos, 1996). For as Oakley (1988) states “traditional criteria for interviewing can be summarised as the admonition that the interviewing situation is a one-way process in which the interviewer elicits and receives, but does not give information.” However Oakley (1988) goes on to suggest that such “traditional interviewing practice creates problems for feminist interviewers whose primary orientation is towards the validation of women’s subjective experiences as women, and as people.” It is believed that through adhering to feminist research principles, the development of an equal relationship between myself and the women involved was possible.

3.5 PARTICIPANTS

Participants for this study were primarily sought using flyers and notices placed at the crèche located within the Massey University Albany Campus. I personally visited the crèche on five separate occasions to speak with women interested in participating, to answer their questions and to set up interview times. By appealing to female students in this manner the sampling was directed towards what constitutes typical, and suitable cases relevant to this study. Several of the participants were also sought via word of mouth. Suitability to participate was based on 3 criteria: 1) being involved in formal tertiary study, either on a full-time or part-time basis, 2) being female, and 3) having a pre-school aged child (i.e. aged 0-5 years).

Prior to participating in this research project, participants were given both an information sheet, outlining the details of the project, and a consent form, advising them of their rights during their participation. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, and at the request of several participants, details regarding ages were also omitted.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

In considering the limitations of in-depth interviews, namely the potential existence of a hierarchal relationship, I was aware of the importance of promoting an equal and comfortable relationship with the women participants. I was also appreciative of the fact that I was asking each of these women to add to their already busy schedules, which at times felt imposing on my part. It is for this reason that when determining a meeting point for each interview, flexibility and choice were key issues. More often than not the women involved would ask where I would like them to meet, as a central location on neutral ground, the study rooms at the Massey University Library were suggested. If this location did not suit another, a more convenient location was decided upon. On two separate occasions a child was present during the interviews. In providing flexibility and choice with regards to the location of the interviews it was intended the women involved would

feel a sense of control over the interview process. It was also hoped that the women would understand my efforts to promote an equal relationship, one free from hierarchal ties, encouraging them to regard me as a peer and fellow student, rather than “purely as a data-gatherer” (Oakley, 1988). Oakley (1988) stated that part of the feminist research process involving a woman interviewing a woman requires the interviewer to be prepared to invest her own personal identity in the relationship. It is for this reason that general conversation always preceded and followed the interview itself. I answered any questions the women had about my own experiences, my study, and my thoughts both truthfully and honestly in the hope that this would establish genuine rapport with the participants.

To each interview I took a pre-prepared list of questions to guide the interview process. Being a semi-structured interview these questions took the form of prompts for myself, and were therefore both structured and semi-structured (open-ended) in nature. After each of the interviews, I also made both descriptive (portraits of the informants, a description of the physical setting, and accounts of the interview process) and reflective (recording of personal thoughts, feelings, ideas and impressions) notes (Creswell, 1994). Attention was also paid to the body language of the women, for example hand and facial expressions when talking, thus providing insight to the context of their responses. The 12 interviews took place over a 3 month period, and on average lasted approximately 45 minutes.

This study used one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 12 women students. Each woman was interviewed once. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed by the author. The transcripts were later analysed using thematic analysis.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Each of the 12 interview audiotapes were transcribed by myself. Following this the transcripts were coded and catalogued according to dominant themes, ideas and patterns identifiable in the experiences of the women involved. The chosen method for analysis was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has been defined by Morse and Field (1995) as

involving “the search for and identification of common threads that extend throughout an entire interview, or set of interviews” Described as being “a way of seeing” (Boyatzis, 1998) this was believed an appropriate method to draw from the experiences of these women, as it drew attention to prominent issues as portrayed through their stories. Boyatzis (1998) further clarified that thematic analysis is indeed a process to be used with qualitative information, such as that derived from interviews. Thematic analysis enables researchers to use qualitative information in a systematic manner, ultimately increasing its accuracy and/or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, situations and events (Boyatzis, 1998).

In developing the ability to use thematic analysis I followed the four guiding themes presented by Boyatzis (1998) 1) sensing themes – recognising a codable moment, 2) doing it reliably – recognising the codable moment and encoding it consistently and reliably, 3) developing codes, and 4) interpreting the information and themes in the context of a conceptual framework – contributing to the development of knowledge. I believe that in developing coding categories for the emerging themes and patterns in this manner, and comparing my findings with results and patterns predicted from both feminist theory and the literature, allows for the searching of meanings in the experiences of these women.

Data analysis was performed as an activity simultaneously with data collection and data interpretation. As stated, during each interview field notes were taken, providing insight into the context of the women’s responses. Preliminary analysis of the interviews began while typing each of the transcripts. During this time I remained actively aware of impressions, ideas and similarities that arose in my mind. I then re-read each interview a number of times listing issues that appeared dominant in the experiences of these women In analysing the actual transcripts I enlisted the use of thematic networks, an analytic tool which provides “a technique for breaking up text, and finding within it explicit rationalisations and their implicit signification” (Attride-Stirling, 2001). While thematic analysis endeavours to expose the themes prominent in a text at different levels, thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and portrayal of these themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). According to this analytic method once such a collection of ‘basic themes’ has been

derived they are catalogued according to the underlying story they are telling, otherwise termed 'organising themes.' By using web-like diagrams I was able to organise this data into eight 'organising,' or dominant, themes.

The eight organising themes identified are:

1. The turn around point – 'The birth of my child'
2. Studying as a means of self-fulfilment
3. Childcare
4. Social support and the division of labour
5. The challenges and benefits of multiple roles
6. The inevitability of spillover
7. The multifaceted nature of well-being
8. Feelings of camaraderie

3.8 THE STRENGTH OF THE RESEARCH

3.8.1 VALIDITY

In qualitative research validity is not about establishing the "truth" of "facts" that exist "out there", but instead the focus is on "understanding by participants and readers" (Merrick, 1999). In essence, validity refers to the researchers 'adequacy' to understand and represent people's meanings (Tindall, 1996). One such way to affirm validity in qualitative research is to rely on consensus to achieve interpretive conclusions, thereby enhancing one's quality of judgement (Merrick, 1999). By offering the women participants involved the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews, with the request for feedback, along with informal discussions following each of the interviews, allowing for both clarification and confirmation, it was my intent to gain what Stiles (cited in Merrick, 1999) termed testimonial validity - 'confirmation of the accuracy of interpretations as determined by participants.' While only five of the twelve participants took the chance to review their transcripts no revisions to the underlying messages were required. All however, took the

time and opportunity following their interviews to informally discuss and confirm their experiences.

CREDIBILITY According to Sandelowski (1986) the truth value of qualitative investigation generally resides in the discovery of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by those involved. For this reason Guba and Lincoln (1981) posit credibility to be the criterion against which the truth value of qualitative research be evaluated. Credibility refers to the “conscious effort to establish confidence in an accurate interpretation of the meaning of the data” (Carboni, 1995). This once again was sought by offering participants the opportunity to review and clarify their interview transcripts.

AUTHENTICITY Authenticity involves the “portrayal of research that reflects the meanings and experiences that are lived and perceived by the participants” (Sandelowski, 1986). It is therefore believed by Hammersley (1992) that an attempt to remain true to the phenomenon under study, i.e. the experiences of women in multiple roles, is essential. It is believed that this has been achieved through the continual acknowledgement of my position within the research, my personal experience in multiple roles, my desire to fulfil other roles, and my openness and willingness to share this with the women involved in my research project.

CRITICALITY ‘As differing interpretations, assumptions and knowledge backgrounds have the potential to influence the research process, a systematic research design is essential to demonstrate evidence of critical appraisal’ (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001). In adhering to both qualitative and feminist research principles it is believed such critical appraisal has been achieved. By following simple techniques such as the development of a self-conscious research design, articulating data collection and analysis decisions, providing verbatim transcription, conducting an extensive literature review, all while reflexively evaluating the research process, I believe such criticality has been achieved.

INTEGRITY “Interviewing is a social interaction and as such is a shared communication” (Davies & Dodd, 2002). Consequently the subjectivity of interpretative research posits the investigator as a person who may interpret data uniquely (Johnson, 1999). Despite this however ‘integrity must be evidenced in the research process to assure that the interpretation is valid and grounded within the data’ (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle., 2001). This was represented through recursive and repetitive checks of interpretations by addressing alternative understandings and paying attention to discrepancies, primarily carried out in the data analysis and writing stages of the research (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle., 2001). Through using an analytic method, such as that of thematic networks, I was able to illustrate pathways incorporating all such data, subsequently allowing rich descriptions of my findings.

3.8.2 RELIABILITY

Traditionally reliability is described as “the extent to which a research endeavour and findings can be replicated” (Merrick, 1999). However given that there is no “one-truth,” both qualitative and feminist researchers tend to agree that “a study cannot be repeated, given the unique, highly changeable, and personal nature of the research endeavour” (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994, cited in Merrick, 1999). As such qualitative researchers look for reliability in their data based on consistency and care in the application of research practices, which are reflected in the visibility of research practices, and a reliability in their analysis, and conclusions (Davies & Dodd, 2002).

TRUSTWORTHINESS

According to Merrick (1999) qualitative researchers often address the issue of reliability by way of trustworthiness, encompassing elements of good practice throughout the research process. Sandelowski (1986) termed the ability to confirm the degree of trustworthiness as auditability. As stated by Sandelowski (1986) auditability is evaluated when the researcher provides descriptions, explanations and justifications on what was actually done during the research process and why. In an effort to achieve such trustworthiness, I adhered to the

following principles, as suggested by Sandelowski (1986). These include: 1) descriptions of how I became interested in the subject matter of the study, 2) an explanation of the specific purposes (or aims) of the study, 3) an explanation of how participants came to be involved in the study, and how they were approached, 4) information on how the data was collected, 5) how long data collection lasted, 6) the nature of the settings in which the data was collected, and 7) how the data was reduced for analysis, interpretation and presentation. Trustworthiness is further enhanced by a clear description of the location of the researcher within the research project, demonstrating a commitment to revealing, rather than avoiding, the researcher's involvement, highlighting that "trustworthiness is more than a set of procedures, but a personal belief system that shapes the procedures as a process" (Steinmetz, cited in Merrick, 1999).

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following provides information on the ethical considerations encountered and considered during all stages of the research process.

3.9.1 ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical approval was sought, and received, by staff in the Psychology Department, Massey University, Palmerston North. Full informed permission was also received from the Manageress of the Massey University Albany Crèche to visit and hand out flyers and notices to interested participants.

3.9.2 FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT

Participation was on a voluntary basis. Prior to taking part in the project, potential participants were given both an information sheet and a consent form, adhering to Massey University guidelines, to take away and consider. Before beginning the interviews it was made clear that they were able to withdraw at any stage, could ask to miss any question

they were not comfortable answering, and would have the opportunity to review their transcripts, to make any modifications, or clarifications, if they so desired. Each woman signed a consent form, the majority of which were signed and received by myself at the beginning of the interview.

3.9.3 THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

By informing participants that they could leave any questions unanswered, and also request for the audiotapes to be turned off at any stage, I was adhering to their right to privacy. It was recognised that the nature of this research project was personal in nature, and that I was asking these women to share their inner-most experiences and emotions relating to their own personal goals, their partners, and their children.

3.9.4 THE RIGHT TO ANONYMITY

Due to the personal nature of this research, anonymity of participants was of utmost concern. Through all stages of the research and writing process, participants have been referred to by pseudonyms, which were randomly assigned following each interview. Also at the request of several participants, ages of the women involved were also withheld. It was their belief that including their ages in the writing process would make them too easily identifiable. It was not my intention at any stage of the research process to make the identities of these women recognisable.

3.9.5 THE RIGHT TO CONFIDENTIALITY

Information collected during this research project has been accessed only by myself. While not in use both the audiotapes and transcripts were kept in a filing cabinet within my own home. Participants were made aware of my intent to use the information gathered from their interviews solely in this research project, and that this information would be used descriptively in the writing process. At the completion of the research process, participants

have a choice as to whether they would like to take ownership of their interview audiotapes and transcripts, or if they would be comfortable having me destroy them.

3.10 PARTICIPANT PROFILES

12 female students were interviewed.

Patricia Patricia is a full time student, and solo-mother of a two year old daughter. She is currently studying towards a degree in Social Work. Patricia began her study when her daughter was 1 year old, initially childcare was provided by her mother, however now she is in fulltime daycare. Patricia has studied previously at the tertiary level, completing a Certificate in Community Work. At the time of our meeting, Patricia was just about to begin new part-time employment.

Sarah Sarah is married, and has two pre-school aged children, a daughter aged 2 years, and a son aged 6 months. Sarah has just started studying for her degree in Adult Education. She is currently enrolled as a fulltime student. Tertiary study is not new for Sarah; she has previously obtained a Diploma in Travel and Tourism in 1993. Both of Sarah's children are in daycare 3 half days per week. Sarah also maintains 2 working roles, both of which are part-time.

Frances Frances is a part time student. She is married and has 2 children, a daughter aged 6 years, and a son aged 2 ½ years. Having never studied at the tertiary level before, Frances is studying for a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology. Her childcare arrangements for her son involve 3 mornings per week in daycare, and help from extended family.

Anne Anne is a solo-mother to a 3 year old son. She is a fulltime student, currently studying towards her Bachelor of Social Work. This is the first time she has studied at the tertiary level. Anne's son was 14 months old when she began her university

studies; he is currently in daycare fulltime. Anne is also involved in part-time volunteer work.

Denise Denise began her studies as a solo-mother to a young daughter, now 6 years of age. She has since married and had another daughter, now aged 2 years. Denise is a part-time student, studying towards a Bachelor of Business Studies. Denise has studied at the tertiary level before, studying to be a vet nurse, and an A Grade Hydatids Officer. With her eldest daughter now at school, her current childcare arrangements for her younger daughter involves using daycare 3 days a week. Denise is also involved in part-time work.

Genevieve Genevieve is married with two preschool aged children, a son aged 4 years, and a daughter aged 2 years. Genevieve is currently working towards her PhD in Nursing, after having completed a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Arts degree. Genevieve has also gained nursing qualifications. With regards to childcare arrangements, both children attend daycare 3 days a week. Genevieve is also actively involved in a management committee and lectures on a part-time basis.

Angela Angela is a part-time student studying towards a Bachelor of Business Studies (BBS), with an accounting major. Angela is also married and is the mother of two daughters, aged 4 and 6 years. Angela has studied at the tertiary level previously; she has a Bachelor of Agricultural Science, and a Secondary School Teaching Diploma. With one child at school, Angela has her youngest child in both public kindy and daycare, totalling fulltime care. Angela also maintains three part-time working roles, and is a volunteer on a management committee.

Lucy Lucy is married with 3 children, a 15 year old daughter, and two sons aged 8 years and 3 ½ years. Lucy is currently completing her PhD in Information Systems Management. She is a fulltime student. Lucy's current childcare arrangements for her youngest child involve fulltime daycare.

Brenda Brenda is married with one young son aged 6 months. She is a fulltime student, studying towards a Diploma in Adult Education. This is the first time Brenda has studied at the tertiary level. With regards to childcare arrangements, Brenda utilises both daycare and friends. Brenda is also involved in part-time work in the field of event management.

Kathy Kathy is a part-time student, studying towards her Master of Arts degree in Psychology. Kathy is married and has a young daughter, aged 8 months. Kathy's papers allow for both extramural and internal study, therefore her childcare arrangements are somewhat flexible, and she relies on both daycare and family and friends.

Sally Sally is married and has 2 children, a girl aged 7 years, and a boy aged 3 years. She is currently studying towards her Bachelor of Business Studies part-time. With regard to childcare Sally places her son in daycare 3 days per week. Sally is also involved in part-time office work for her husband.

Doreen Doreen is a part-time student, studying towards a Bachelor in Education. Doreen is a solo mother to a 3 year old son. This is the first time Doreen has studied at the tertiary level, her highest educational qualification being 6th Form Certificate. Doreen's son attends daycare 2 mornings a week, and is also cared for by Doreen's mother 2 afternoons a week. Doreen is also involved in part-time work as a personal trainer.

3.11 SUMMARY

It was believed that through adhering to feminist research principles, and by utilising a qualitative research design an appropriate environment would be established enabling exploration into the personal accounts of the women participants as they navigate their experiences in multiple roles. Throughout the research process I personally acknowledged my position within the research, how I came to be interested in this topic, what my motivations were and what I hoped I could learn from this process. It was also hoped that

through participating in this research the women involved would also gain from this experience. Through the design of this research it was intended that the women would be given a voice, that they would be 'co-researchers' in this project. Through the analysis of the experiences of these women, eight organising themes arose. It is believed that these themes provide insight and understanding into the lives of these women; women who occupy multiple roles, including that of student and mother.

CHAPTER 4 – EMERGING THEMES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis of the data collected led to the development of eight organising (or dominant) themes which reflect the experiences of these women. These themes represent a process of thought, aspiration and reflection that has led each of these women through the decision to study at the tertiary level at a time in their lives when they have young children, one that has resulted in their 'status' as multiple role women. The eight organising themes are:

1. The turn around point – 'The birth of my child'
2. Studying as a means of self-fulfilment
3. Childcare
4. Social support and the division of labour
5. The challenges and benefits of multiple roles
6. The inevitability of spillover
7. The multifaceted nature of well-being
8. Feelings of camaraderie

Through the analysis of these themes it is possible to identify the desires, motivations and difficulties as experienced differently by each of the women involved. From their initial thoughts of studying with young children, and their reasons for doing so, one is able to clearly establish that women participate in education at the tertiary level for a variety of reasons. While some of these reasons are more intrinsic in nature, for example self-fulfilment, others are more practical, focusing instead on providing a secure future for their families. The very fact that these mothers have preschool age children meant childcare was an issue at the forefront of their minds when deciding to study, and was also an issue closely associated with social support and the division of labour within their homes. The women involved in this study reported that they felt they needed, or indeed were expected, to be "all things to all people." This description perfectly describes the challenge of multiple roles, and the high likelihood of spillover from one sphere of their lives to another.

A common question posed in the literature surrounds the well-being of multiple role women, and this study was no exception. While pressure and stress were experienced by the women involved, the high degree of encouragement they found in various, and sometimes unexpected, sources proved to be the much needed source of support that gave both justification for their journey, and hope for their futures.

4.2 THE TURN AROUND POINT – ‘THE BIRTH OF MY CHILD’

In discussing the initial reasons for undertaking a university or tertiary degree, many of the women involved stated that the birth of their child had a profound impact on their decision. While many of the mothers involved had experienced some form of higher education in their past, for others this was a new and challenging experience. Especially for the solo mothers involved, having their child was often described as a ‘turn around point.’ They discussed that in having their child they realised they needed to be able to provide a safe and secure future for their families, without the need to rely on anyone else.

Patricia described her initial situation when she learned of her pregnancy with her daughter.

“Before I came to university I was doing fairly well nothing, running around doing bum jobs, and then I got pregnant and decided I had to do something for me and my little one, and actually get a decent job at the end of it, because I was on my own with her, and I knew that right from the start. So I thought ‘well if I don’t get off my bum and do something, no one else is going to... Everything fell into place from when I knew I was pregnant. I thought ‘ok, now I need to sort my life out’... I had 9 months to go from a bum who did nothing, to a mother.”

While Patricia was adamant that she was going to need to provide for her new baby alone, she also knew she did not want to be seen as a solo mother who relied on a government benefit to bring up her child. Patricia describes how she did not want to fall into the typical social stereotype regarding solo mothers.

“I do not want to sit on a benefit until my child is 15, and then I get booted off... I just couldn’t stand the idea of people looking at me and going ‘well she just sits around all day.’ I had to do something. Also I looked at my neighbours at the time and I just went ‘my god I’m going to turn into her,’ a single mother with like 4 kids, 3 kids, and no hope of ever doing anything, and I thought ‘my god I am not going to turn into that’, no way.”

Doreen describes a similar situation to Patricia regarding her decision to begin a tertiary degree. Doreen initially began thinking about her desire to obtain a qualification while she was pregnant with her son. Until this time she had been working as a personal trainer doing shift work, she felt this was a limiting career for the future of both herself and her baby.

“I initially began thinking about entering into education while I was pregnant with my son. Until this time I was pretty much footloose and fancy free... Now that I was having a child I realised I needed to get a more established and focused career, one that could provide long term. I also wanted to think about bettering myself, and if I never married I would like to have a better career than a gym instructor. Yeah, when I had my son I had a major life turnabout. All of a sudden there was someone who relied on me and I felt I had to be a responsible parent and get my life together. That’s why I came to university.”

Doreen too felt she did not want to have to rely on others to provide a secure future for herself and her son. Like Patricia she did not want to fall into the social stereotype of a “DPB mum” expecting others to provide the necessities in life.

“I didn’t want society thinking I was a bludger. You know, solo mum on a benefit, the ‘DPB mum.’ I think I wanted to prove I was a worthy person, and even though I was on my own, I didn’t expect the Government to support me. Also I wanted more than just the bare necessities, I didn’t want to be scrimping and saving every penny, worrying if I had enough money to pay the electricity bill. I knew I wanted more than that for us. Don’t get me wrong, it would be great if my son’s father would contribute to his living costs, but I know now not to rely on others, it’s up to me... I don’t want to be a solo mum on a benefit. I want to have choices.”

When Anne decided to begin her Bachelor of Social Work, her son's future was at the forefront of her mind. She, like Patricia and Doreen, wanted to secure a sound future for her son, one where she could provide a stable home life, a desire that provides much motivation.

“Having my son was a turning point where I really needed to do something to ensure a good future for myself and my son. That has been my greatest motivation... Having my son motivated me to get there, and I have always been an academic, and I hope to go on and do more studies.”

When Denise began her degree she too had the primary focus of gaining a more structured career. Having previously been employed in on-call shift work, impending motherhood made her realise that this would not be a career conducive to being a solo parent.

“I had always studied, I have always wanted to achieve, but when I became a solo mum I wanted a future for us... I wanted to come out and be able to have a job... When I started [my degree] I was a single parent, so I couldn't go back to my trade because it was on call night work. I had a baby and I couldn't do that anymore, so I wanted to make sure that by the time she was 5 and started school, I could have a good job and support the two of us.”

Like the other solo mothers involved in this study, Denise had strong feelings regarding stereotypes on single mothers. Not wanting to be reliant on the Government was a strong incentive for Denise to acquire the necessary education that would enable her to provide for both herself and her daughter.

“I didn't want to be a single parent on the benefit, and the Government is wonderful. I needed to be at home with her until my daughter was 5, because financially I knew I wouldn't make enough to work and send her to daycare fulltime, but it was definitely a social thing. I did not want to be living on a benefit. Being a single parent was probably one of my worst fears.”

The overwhelming desire from these women to avoid welfare dependency highlights at least one source of motivation for these solo mothers not shared by the married women involved in this research. The well-being of single mothers increasingly depends on their own ability to earn sufficient income on which to rely. Consequently education provides the most efficient route out of welfare, and welfare dependency, resulting in increased employability and a higher paying job (Harris, 1991; Hu, 1999). It was stated by Weiss (1997) that children who grow up in welfare dependent families are themselves more likely to fall into the same welfare dependency cycle. Based on statements, such as this given by Patricia *“I just have to look at her and I look at my house, and ‘go we cannot grow old in this house,’ no way, I live in a state house, and it’s not exactly the nicest place in the world”* I concluded reliance on welfare is one outcome the above mothers are endeavouring to avoid.

While not faced with the same initial driving force of solely providing a future for their children, a common response from the married mothers involved in this study was also that the birth of their children allowed them either the time and convenience to initiate something they had always dreamed of, or the opportunity to complete something they had previously started.

For Lucy, returning to study her post-graduate degree was more of a way to combine something she had always planned to do (gain her post-graduate qualification) with her desire to have another child.

“I wanted to have a third child and it was difficult for me to work fulltime because you have to make commitments to be there at a certain time. Children always get sick during the first 2 years, so I thought ‘since I like studying it would give me an option in the future.’ It would enable me to have a lifestyle change.”

Sarah describes how her decision to study was a toss up between returning to work, or being a stay at home mum.

“I was deliberating over whether to go back to work, or become, stay as a full time parent, and the best way for me to be able to do that was actually to study and get an allowance while I study... I wanted to stay at home, but yeah, it wasn’t viable just to stay at home and do nothing... , and I wanted to get a degree so this was perfect timing.”

Returning to work was always the plan for Kathy, following the birth of her daughter. What she didn’t anticipate was her strong desire to be a stay at home mum, at least until her daughter went to school.

“Initially the plan was to return to work when my daughter was 3 months old. I know that sounds like a quick turn around time, but I have always worked, and I just couldn’t see myself not working. But that all changed once my daughter was born. I would never have guessed my maternal instinct would be so strong; I just couldn’t bear to leave her in daycare and miss all the important first milestones. So knowing that I would be at home for at least the next 5 years enjoying my daughter, but falling behind in the labour market stakes, I realised this would be the perfect opportunity to do my post-graduate degree, to retrain or up skill so to speak. At least that way I will have gained something from my time away, so I won’t be way behind when I return. Sometimes I think I am just trying to make myself feel better, and not feel guilty for not working, but I love it and it works really well... Who would have thought having a child would be a great opportunity for continuing the education you always wanted!”

Given the common societal stereotypes regarding solo mothers, one unexpected finding was the high degree of similarity between the solo mothers and married mothers involved. This was true with regards to the ages of the participants, the courses in which they were studying, and their levels of previous education. For these factors there was no obvious pattern distinguishing the solo mothers from the married mothers. The above comments provided by the women involved show that the context of participation in tertiary study varies greatly for mothers, much like was identified by David et al. (1996). David et al. (1996) stated that choices, such as that of beginning a degree, are the ‘products of a particular context and set of structural and moral constraints,’ meaning that although the

outcomes may appear similar, the particular choices made by mothers to reach this point may actually differ quite substantially.

From the descriptions given, it would be easy to assume that each of these women have a high degree of choice, however David et al. (1996) are quick to note that despite such an impression, if mothers do chose to participate in a role outside the home, they must deal with the effects of this decision as a 'private responsibility.' It is with regard to the 'effects' of participation that it is believed differences exist between solo mothers and married mothers of young children. What can also be derived from the above statements is the importance education has for women. The descriptions by these women reiterate that education is the key for women, as it enables them to gain both economic freedom and personal achievement. Subsequently self-fulfilment is presented as the second organising theme.

4.3 STUDYING AS A MEANS OF SELF-FULFILMENT

Many of the mothers involved in this study felt that having their children provided them with the opportunity to study at the tertiary level, either to gain future employment, or retrain in an industry in which they are already involved. Throughout the interviews however it also became clear that the women drew more from their studies than a qualification alone. They were also creating an individual identity, one of self-fulfilment, pride and accomplishment, one free from feelings of their sole purpose as being a mother. Patricia describes this simply.

"It exercises my brain, I actually feel like a person, not a mother for some part of the day."

For Genevieve it is the challenge and the final result that make study so rewarding. She believes that at the PhD level the extra energy and brain power required make her success all the more gratifying. Study, like her work, gets Genevieve thinking outside her children,

she feels the structure she has at the moment integrating motherhood, study and work commitments, provides the right balance for reaping the rewards.

“As a student there are huge rewards from undertaking personal study. Certainly at the PhD level I recognise it more in terms of the extension that you have to undertake with your own thinking and having to really make your brain work a lot harder and you go through these periods of absolutely drowning in this lack of understanding of anything. Then all of a sudden you pop out the other side and understand why you are actually doing this now. Its very rewarding and a great big high... My study gets me thinking outside my children, but then so does my work.”

Sarah finds that university allows her to take a break from being mum; she found university study allowed her brain to begin functioning again after having two children, and allowed for interaction with like minded people.

“I like the release and getting away from the kids ... I’ve had two children relatively close together – your brain sort of shuts down a little bit when you’ve had kids. When I came back to university I was able to re-operate and start thinking again, and that’s been really cool... The one paper that I do have that’s a contact paper is great, we are all covering different things, various aspects of education and psychology and so forth, and so its nice to talk to people about issues other than children.”

Denise also finds the interaction with other students a huge benefit of studying; meeting like people, with like interests, and allowing her to be herself. She also describes how the university as an institution inspires her to remain studying at this level.

“I get to be around other people. I become me, not just mum. I work part time as well, one day a week. I love it, and this university makes me feel proud of it. It is a beautiful campus. I feel privileged to come [here]. I love meeting clever people, [I find it] inspiring.”

Frances feels she does not really belong in the university culture as such. For Frances her study is more about fulfilling a personal need for achievement, and it is the gaining of good grades that she finds gratifying, and motivates her to continue.

“I probably don’t meet an awful lot of people. This semester I am totally extramural, past papers I have been internal. I am not involved in that whole subculture of University. I meet a few people but its more fulfilling if I get a good grade.”

While Doreen feels she does not fit into the typical University culture, she sees studying as a means of interacting with new and interesting people. She has found the university experience a steep, but rewarding, learning curve, one where she has to push herself positively to achieve her goals.

“I do enjoy the interaction with the other students, although I don’t fit into either group. I’m not a carefree student anymore, and I’m not really an older student. I’m in the middle. I have found that I like to push myself to see what I can achieve, something I’ve never really had the opportunity to do before. I love telling the people who doubted me how far I’ve come; it’s a great feeling... it’s an extremely rewarding and satisfying experience mentally.”

The descriptions by Frances and Doreen of not fitting in with the dominant university culture are not uncommon for both mature students, and women students with children. The traditional definition of a ‘typical’ student is given by Hornosty (1998) as “one who is able to devote all of *his* time and energy to academic pursuits.” Granted, with the increase of female students attending tertiary institutions this definition is becoming more obsolete; however it continues to depict the singular focus of what is still considered by many as the typical university student. In Edwards (1993) study, women reported that their personas differ from that of younger students who do not share as many roles. It is believed by many researchers that it is indeed the very nature of occupying multiple roles which is distancing women students with young children from full participation in university life (Edwards, 1993; Hornosty, 1998). This is supported by the Queen’s University Faculty Association

Subcommittee (cited in Hornosty, 1998) “as it is well known that interaction with one’s peers contributes most to research output, once again it is women’s research activities that will suffer... given that many women continue to carry major family responsibilities, they pay a price by not being promoted out of the lower ranks, failing to consider an academic life as a career choice.” For many of the women students involved in this study, the flexibility of part-time enrolment and extramural study makes integrating the role of student with their roles in the family more achievable. One detrimental consequence of these two modes of study that needs consideration is that their very nature limits such on-campus, inter-student involvement as believed imperative by Prummer (2000). The importance of such interaction was noted by a number of the women involved, who stated that it was the contact with like minded people from which they derived the most satisfaction from their tertiary studies.

It is not surprising that all of the above women have their own personal reasons for undertaking tertiary study. This is a finding common in such research. Edwards (1975) found similar responses from women re-entering into education after time away, one such participant noted ‘no doubt many women become interested in studying for themselves when they have had children.’ Another said after having her children she began to look at her daily life of cooking and cleaning and ask ‘what’s in it for me?’ This particular participant went on to say that despite this mindset being potentially selfish, she recognised that she too was an individual with her own feelings and needs. It is often this way of thinking that encourages women with young children to take the initial step and begin their career as a student. Younes & Asay (1998) found that the women in their study reported that their commitment to self-advancement by way of studying directly threatened their commitment to family, leaving them feeling ‘torn between two worlds.’ As such after deciding on their own desires to peruse an education, the issue of childcare becomes a pertinent one, one that has the potential to hinder a women’s success in this domain. The issue of childcare is therefore portrayed as the next organising theme.

4.4 CHILDCARE

Each of the mothers involved in this research utilised some form of organised childcare, whether it be the crèche of the institution they were attending, private daycare, public kindy or the help of family and friends. A high degree of satisfaction was found among the mothers regarding their choice of childcare, one that they felt benefited both themselves and the development of their children. When I asked Lucy regarding her current childcare arrangements for her son, and whether she was satisfied with these, her response was simple.

“Yes, [he is in full time care] Monday to Friday... It’s ideal; no I don’t want different arrangements.”

This uncomplicated statement from Lucy proved to be the underlying trend for many of the responses from the mothers involved. This finding was somewhat surprising given the issues surrounding childcare for employed women. It is noted in the literature that dissatisfaction with childcare arrangements is one of the biggest sources of strain experienced by working mothers (Piechowski, 1992; Rankin, 1993; Tingey & Kiger, 1996). Patricia describes her childcare arrangements, and how these are ideal for her current situation. Patricia has found she has now settled into a routine with her daughter’s childcare arrangements, something she finds eases the pressure off herself and greatly benefits her daughter, despite the occasional criticisms from others.

“I was actually very lucky; I got her into that crèche a couple of days a week when I first started studying here... Now she is in there (crèche) 5 days a week, I get grief from people who say that it’s mean to have her in there 5 days a week... I wouldn’t change my childcare arrangements for anything... They’re great in there; they are the most amazing childcare. They say that my kid is pretty advanced, everyone says that to me, but I swear that is also because of the quality of care that she gets. They teach her to speak, she can sing so many songs... I am very happy with where [she] is, cause I suppose she is getting a better chance than if she just sat at home with me all day long.”

Sarah describes the crèche located on the University campus as the ideal childcare situation for her two pre-school age children. She finds this is beneficial to herself in regards to ease, and to her children, in that she feels they are receiving the necessary stimulation, something she feels she might not be able to provide at home.

“I’ve got the kids in crèche 3 half days a week... I’m at university all the time that I’ve got them in childcare... I like the kids to interact with other people and play, and it just gives them a bit of socialisation skills... I don’t feel guilty about the kids, especially my 2 year old. She’s got a lot occupying her mind cause she is quite an on to it little girl, so she needs to be stimulated and I can’t do that at home as much.”

Patricia’s and Sarah’s descriptions of feeling their children are receiving a higher degree of stimulation by attending the crèche than they would at home, proved to be a common feeling shared by these mothers. All of the mothers involved stated they believed their child was benefiting developmentally from attending a daycare facility, one that could devote time and attention to their child, which advanced their cognitive development and social skills. This finding is not surprising given that Ispa (1995) stated that a mother’s education level is positively related to their belief in the importance of providing infants with age appropriate stimulation. It is therefore to be expected that these mothers, studying towards tertiary qualifications, appreciate and anticipate this need for their children. Ispa (1995) provides further support for these feelings as expressed by the mothers, as maternal education level is also related to support for autonomy in children, the ability to recognise that children benefit from socialising with others their own age and forming their own friendships, a common benefit achieved through a child’s daycare attendance.

Denise describes the invaluable service the university crèche provides to studying mothers, something she found lacking from other private daycare facilities. She also comments on how the crèche has become her support network, one she can rely on when she needs them.

“The kids love university daycare... The university daycare is wonderful in the ability to change your classes each semester, and when exams are on, they stay open longer...”

They stay open later and will give them a light tea. You would never get that at a private crèche. They are so good. If you haven't booked them in and you need another day, they will always accommodate. It is my support and I need them as I don't have family. They appreciate that they are dealing with students so they know times of lectures change... They are very knowledgeable about what's going on, on Campus."

Anne also described how the university crèche became not only a source of enjoyment for her son, but a source of support for her personally.

"I rung up the crèche and put my name down and went in and it seemed as though he would get a lot out of it... he is basically fulltime, 9-3 five days a week... I have found the crèche is wonderful, not only in terms of my child's needs, but as a wonderful support for students. They can be very reassuring... you wouldn't get that at another daycare. The crèche is understanding that you are students."

Denise's and Anne's depictions of how the crèche became a personal support network was common in the descriptions given by the mothers involved. With the provision of an on-campus crèche, the university is providing students with a much needed service. "The primary goal of the centres is the care of the student's children, and the primary responsibility of adults in the centre is to see that the children are safe, stimulated, appreciated and comfortable" (Keyes, 1984). It is therefore believed that the creation of a support network through the crèche was an unexpected, although indeed welcome, form of assistance to these studying mothers brought about purely through the dispositions and professionalism of its employees. It is through these lines of support and communication that these mothers are able to enquire not just on the development and care of their children, but also on issues surrounding the university itself, their studies and additional services available to parenting students provided by both the tertiary institution and the Government. This form of support is described as invaluable by Prummer (2000) who states that female students need the provision to enable them to learn from the experiences of other women, both with regards to potential problems they may face, and coping strategies which have already been tried and tested. It is believed that interaction through

the crèche, with its employees and other mothers, these women are able to achieve this form of support, relating to their children, their studies, and their personal lives.

For Frances, a mix of both crèche and family make up her childcare arrangements. Frances is happy with her current arrangements, and recognises the benefits her son gains from his time at crèche, so much so that even though there are cheaper options available, if finances would allow she would love to have him at the crèche fulltime. Like both Denise and Anne, Frances explains how an on campus crèche provides the additional support necessary for studying mothers, making it all the more possible to juggle their multiple roles.

“I have got extended family that help. He is here (at crèche) 3 mornings a week and then I have to use my mother-in-law occasionally. The bulk of it is at the crèche... he has an amazing day here. He is learning heaps here. I would like to have him in more, but we can’t afford it... Childcare is expensive. To put my son in public kindy costs hardly anything, but the timing is rotten. Morning kindy only goes to 11.45 so that slots me out of doing anything internally... [University] childcare lasts longer, they go until 12.45 and that means he has his lunch as well. So that is one less thing I have to worry about when I bring him home.”

Like Frances, Angela has also investigated public kindy as a form of childcare for her daughter. While she admits that fitting in the shorter hours with both her work and study commitments is trying, she believes that having a mix of both carers and friends is vital.

“She is at public kindy as well, which is hugely awkward and annoying, because 3 days a week I have to pick her up and take her down to kindy. We moved house when my older daughter was just about to finish kindy and start school and it meant she didn’t know anyone at school, and I didn’t know the parents. So if we had stayed where we were we would have known everybody at the local primary. So I felt it was quite important to go to local kindy and play with the local kids and go to school with them.”

In an ideal world Brenda would prefer to be the sole carer for her young son. However with her new study commitments she realises that this is not possible, and appreciates that this provides an excellent opportunity for her son to socialise, both with other children and other adults. For this reason she utilises both the crèche at her Institute and friends as the sources of childcare to provide the necessary balance.

“I use the crèche at the Institute and also we have friends that live near and she also has him a couple of days a week... I like the fact that he interacts with children at the crèche, but it is nice for him to have a bit of one on one care with our friends as well... I think we have a good mix at the moment. I would prefer of course to be with him all the time myself, but that’s in an ideal world of course. But really I love that he is becoming so social, and I really believe that is all down to the crèche, they truly are wonderful, and he seems to love it which is very reassuring.”

In stating their desire for their children to experience a mix of carers, in the forms of professional daycare centres, family members and friends, these mothers are again recognising the developmental and social needs of their children. By ensuring a ‘balance’ in care providers I believe these mothers are looking to act in the best interests of their children. From the descriptions given by these women I feel efforts to arrange such diversity in care can have beneficial impacts to a child’s development, such as reducing separation anxiety, increasing a child’s social interaction skills, increasing a child’s independence and autonomy, and allowing for individual personality development. Angela provides an excellent description of her reasons for wanting this mix in care for her daughter, suggesting that by including public kindy into her care arrangements, when her daughter begins school, she will do so with secure friendships formed through her various care providers.

Childcare arrangements are noted as being one of the major stressors for women juggling multiple roles. As identified by Rankin (1993) employed mothers experience a high degree of stress in their childcare roles, including the provision and arranging of childcare and the frustrations, difficulties and dissatisfaction associated with this. Similar results were found

by Piechowski (1992) who identified that dissatisfaction with childcare, and the struggle to secure adequate, affordable childcare was one of the major sources of strain for multiple role women. While all of the mothers expressed their overall satisfaction with their current childcare arrangements, room for improvement was noted.

Much like was stated by Hornosty (1998) Genevieve claims the area of daycare is one where the University as an institution fails to provide enough support for studying mothers.

“University could be more supportive of parents. I haven’t experienced huge support from the University for being a mother. Yes, there is loads of support for people who are doing PhD’s, financial, time support, but childcare is not considered... I think there is a lack of support from the university for the daycare centre... As far as I am concerned the university should be paying for the entire daycare facility... It provides a vital service, not only to staff members but obviously to students who need the facility to be able to attend university. There is a huge market in terms of mothers and fathers with young children.”

Genevieve goes on to describe the lack of informal childcare as frustrating, so much so she is willing to pay for fulltime care to enable her to use the crèche whenever she needs. Genevieve describes her ideal situation.

“My main difficulty with daycare at University, is that you book them in for 3 days and that’s it. You cannot get them in any other times because they are full. My difficulty is that when I have to come into meetings or teaching on days when my children are not booked in, I then have to rely on grandparents and others to keep my children... That would be the ideal to be more flexible. I wouldn’t like to see my children there fulltime, although I would like to be in a position to pay for fulltime and then place them there when I wanted it. When my oldest starts school at the end of the year, that is what I will do, pay for a fulltime position for my youngest and only use it when I want to.”

Anne shares similar feelings. She believes that the university could, and indeed should, be more accommodating towards parents, especially in regards to class and exam timetables.

“With the social work degree the majority of them are mothers, and we have 6 o’clock classes. They should try wherever possible to have classes in school hours... Really the two need to match up. The crèche do make allowances, but it is only really if most people want extended hours, as they have to pay their staff. They do ask at exam time if anyone wants extended hours, and only a couple have said they do... There is a huge waiting list.”

Sarah explains that for her, childcare, is a financial issue, and the lack of funding available for married studying mothers is a hindrance to her ability to arrange the childcare she would like.

“It would be easier if there were more opportunities to put the kids in daycare, but that really is a financial factor because obviously daycare is not cheap, and we don’t get any subsidies for having daycare, so it would be nicer if it was cheaper to take them to daycare.”

The above difficulties described by these mothers illustrate perfectly what Hornosty (1998) describes as universities’ failure to adequately acknowledge and address the changing nature, and therefore roles of their students. Subsequently, it is believed the tertiary institutions as a whole can better accommodate for students’ changing needs to further enable their academic success, namely with regards to more affordable, reliable and flexible childcare. As it has been identified by the women involved that the issue of childcare is one they negotiate continuously, often needing to rely on family members and friends. The fourth organising theme therefore addresses social support and the division of labour with their homes, regarding both domestic duties and childcare.

4.5 SOCIAL SUPPORT AND THE DIVISION OF LABOUR

For the women involved in this study, support from friends and family members, both in regards to their decision to undertake a degree and in providing encouragement and assistance along the way, was plentiful. As can be seen the sources of support, and the forms of support that these women rely on vary, once again reiterating the idea presented by David et al. (1996) that women participate in their multiple roles under many different constraints and circumstances.

For Doreen, deciding to start a degree was seen by both friends and family as a way to better both herself and the future of her son, and was therefore met with a high degree of support from both friends and family who readily offer to help any way they can.

“My friends who were still footloose and fancy free thought I was a bit nuts, but Mum realised where I was coming from and so did my married friends. They admired me for trying to change my life for the better and provide a good future for [my son]... My friends are great as they keep me young and don’t let me get bogged down with motherhood... I get child support from [my sons] Dad, and Mum helps out too financially so I am lucky, and have very cheap accommodation with Mum. If I had to pay the going rate for a flat, I couldn’t do what I’m doing.”

Like Doreen, Patricia’s decision to begin studying was met with nothing but positive feedback, from both family and friends.

“They all thought it was great, I had a lot of support... My mother thought it was wonderful ... everybody else in my family were really quite pleased, and my friends all thought it was great... My mother offers every kind of help in the world. There is childcare, definitely. I get a lot of emotional support from my family, um practical support from my friends, more than emotional.”

When Anne discussed her support networks she explained that her support was solely from family, believing her friends were still single and childless and perhaps not understanding of her responsibilities.

“Family only. [My] Friends are very independent and childless. They haven’t a great interest in children. [My family] are not just helping me out, they want to see my son. Everyone wins... I don’t like asking, but just knowing that they are there if I do need it.”

Anne’s identification of a lack of support from friends is not unusual. Younes & Asay (1998) found it not uncommon for relationships between friends, and even family, to be strained due to such friends’ unawareness of the circumstances facing female students, especially those managing multiple roles, including that of mother. Such findings also reiterate the importance for women like Anne to develop support networks with others sharing similar experiences, and highlights the need for universities to provide opportunities for which such networks can be built. The high level of unconditional support as described by Doreen, Patricia and Anne from their families is regarded as an encouraging sign for solo mothers. It was stated by Weiss (1997) that family is an essential part of a [solo] mother’s success, in that providing emotional, practical and even financial support provides what can be termed the ‘best odds’ for both their academic and future success. This notion is further supported by Hirsch & Rapkin (1986) who stated that support by social network members has a critical impact on role satisfaction and success. I concluded that solo mothers are not disadvantaged with regards to support networks when compared to married mothers. This belief is supported by McBride (1990) who explains that social support is commonly thought to build stress resistance and to serve as a buffer when stress is present. She goes on to say that while a spouse may be associated with a form of social support, the number of socially supportive relationships in one’s network may make more of a difference than actually having a spouse.

Frances describes the support and encouragement she receives from her husband and the reactions of her family and friends when she decided to begin studying at the tertiary level for the first time.

“My husband was awesome. He is super supportive, whatever makes me happy... My Mum was just like ‘that’s nice dear.’ I don’t think she believed that I would go on with it. None of my family went on to tertiary levels of education. My husband’s family are virtually all tertiary qualified, so they were really supportive. As long as the family and the marriage is functioning, then they are fine with it.”

She goes on to describe the type of support she relies on from both friends and family.

“Family is childcare and friends is just venting and emotion. Family is much more practical... Friends, because they act as a distraction, you can laugh and talk rubbish, whereas family support looking after us. Looking after my husband and I, they will take the children when [my husband] and I need to say hello to each other... we are pretty good, and we don’t ask too often.”

Brenda received similar encouragement when she announced to family and friends her decision to study, and explains the support networks upon which she relies.

“Hubby was very happy. He is an achiever, so he always likes it when I am doing other things... Everyone thought it is a really positive step now that I have explained how it is all going to work, and that the baby will still get a good level of care. They are very happy and supportive, which is good as I am a bit reliant on them if I need time out on the weekend to finish an assignment... I can call on friends and family at short notice. I mostly plan things well in advance, but every once in a while you need something done on the spur of the moment.... I also get a lot of emotional support, I think you always need emotional support from friends, particularly if they have children already, and can support you with the upbringing of you children. I have done the same for them, so I don’t mind asking when I need help.”

With regards to the degree of support she receives from family, Genevieve has this to say.

“My husband would offer me [emotional] support Family, grandparents, husband, mostly grandparents. I would not be able to do what I do without having some form of support... mostly childcare... Both set of grandparent live within close proximity.”

Genevieve describes her husband's support regarding her studies, however admits that sometimes it can cause pressure in the home, which sometimes requires a bit of juggling.

“My husband has 99% of the time expressed unreserved support for my need and desire to want to continue with study, but there has been times where he has been stressed in his own work that it has been difficult for him to accept the fact that I want to study and he has to look after the children. We have had to rework how it all fits together at the moment... I find it incredibly frustrating and I wish that I didn't have to organise where my children are going to be at a certain time. It's me that has to arrange their time. When I go away to conference, I have to write down their itinerary for my husband to get them there. He doesn't take the responsibility for organising my children.”

Genevieve describes some important characteristics of the marital relationship common to married multiple role women. Biernat & Wortman (1991) describe how it is common in dual-career households for aspects of the husband's work life to have a larger impact on home life, than would that of the wife's. For Genevieve this translates as reluctance, and possibly impatience, in the division of childcare responsibilities. For all of the women involved, the need for informal childcare from both friends and family presents itself as the biggest source of support on which they rely. The very need for such on-call care once again highlights an essential service missing from those provided by tertiary institutions. It is stated by Biernat & Wortman (1991) that the more educated the wives, the less childcare they performed. In the cases of the above women, this is not so. Each of these women, despite their involvement in demanding and time consuming multiple roles, remain the primary carer for their children in comparison with their husbands. Many researchers such as Allen & Hawkins (1999) state that fathers do want to increase their level of involvement with regards to time spent caring for their children. To an extent this has been realised through the provision of interactive play, something husbands spend more time involved in

with their children, than do mothers (Allen & Hawkins, 1999). This finding was confirmed by the married mothers in this study. A common description of a husband's willingness to share the childcare workload involves husbands entertaining children when the mothers needed time to study, time to finish an assignment or time to go to the library, and were often described as involving trips to the park or beach.

Much like in the literature (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Apparala, Reifman & Munsch, 2003) the married women involved in this study reported an unequal division of labour within their homes, both with regard to domestic duties and childcare. Many of these women however did not report dissatisfaction with their current arrangements, their rationale being that their husbands provided the income which enabled them to study, therefore it was only right that they look after things on the domestic front. In their descriptions the women also provided support for the most dominant theories on why women are primarily responsible for domestic duties and childcare. Most women also stated that if they did in fact need help with either domestic duties or childcare, they only needed to ask, and their husbands would provide the necessary assistance. Denise describes the situation within her home, and why she is satisfied with these.

“We both have really good roles. He goes to work and earns good money, and I do the other side of it. He doesn't have a lot to do with the kids. He is a workaholic. We have a great lifestyle and personally I am happy with that. We have good role division. He will always agree to takeaways if I am tired. He is appreciative of what I do around the home.”

Denise's description of being reliant on her husband's income is a common one, and provides support for what has been termed the economic dependency model. This model suggests that housework is a role undertaken primarily by women as they tend to be more economically dependent on their husbands (Greenstein, 2000). It is theorised that as a result wives allocate more time to domestic work, including childcare, than can their husbands. This is perfectly described by Frances.

"[My husband] is out doing his job, this is my job."

Sally too reports a clear distinction between her domestic roles, and her husband's breadwinning roles, and attributes this to her husband's lack of domestic skills.

"My responsibilities really include things like the cooking, cleaning, organising the kids timetables, washing and dressing kids etc, the grocery shopping. My husband is the major breadwinner at the moment and he is good with the kids when he is home and will take them to the swings for a while, things like that, but he is not really what I'd call housetrained, he doesn't really have much of a clue regarding what needs to be done, but that's fair enough I think, he is busy setting up his business, and I'm happy with the way things are at the moment."

Sally's description of her husband not being 'housetrained' is a perfect example of what Allen & Hawkins (1999) describe as an attempt at 'maternal gatekeeping.' In stating her husband's lack of domestic skills as part justification for his unequal involvement in domestic duties, Sally like many of the women, was 'facilitating a gatekeeping schema, one that builds, maintains and reinforces the gate to home and family' (Allen & Hawkins, 1999).

Like Sally, Brenda attributes her own maternal beliefs to her husband's limited involvement in domestic duties. She also recognises that her husband's position in the breadwinning role allows her the opportunity to do all she does, subsequently seeing the division of labour as fair.

"My husband is pretty good. We share the care of the baby when my husband is at home, otherwise it's me 100% and same with the chores, we pretty much share. Everyone has different standards, so I would do more because my standards are higher, he doesn't see what needs doing like I do, or he doesn't see them to the same extent, in saying that though he does all the outside chores. But he is working to support my new choices, my part-time work helps obviously, but he is what they call the main

breadwinner, he enables me to do this, so I see it as fair, and I know he appreciates the demands of study and looking after baby, so I know he appreciates all I do around the home.”

Brenda’s description of her husband’s disproportionate participation in household duties being attributable to her own high standards is further support from Allen & Hawkins (1999) notion of maternal gatekeeping. It is stated by Allen & Hawkins (1999) that in setting their own high standards, mothers display mistrust in paternal involvement, leaving no room for men to develop their own repertoire of parenting and household skills, thus preventing them from becoming equally responsible for such tasks. Brenda also mentions fairness in her description of her household arrangements. The issue of fairness, or perceptions of fairness, is an important one with regards to the division of labour within the home given the prominent occurrence of women partaking in more domestic duties than men. Based on the descriptions of the women involved it is believed that it is in fact a husband’s willingness to participate in domestic duties, even if their participation is not self-initiated, which impacts the woman’s level of satisfaction over their current arrangements as such willingness reflects both support and encouragement. This finding is in support with Thompson (1991) who believes that the most important outcomes of the division of labour are symbolic outcomes, particularly the symbolic outcome of caring.

In describing the division of labour within her home Kathy describes an arrangement based on time availability. While Kathy is no longer working, and is now studying part-time with a new baby, she believes she has more time than her corporate husband to tend to such matters.

“Our situation in the home is quite straight forward. My husband works very long hours in a successful job, and I’m at home, so for me to expect him to come home and clean the toilet would be a bit hypocritical, since I am at home all day... I’m not sure if he understands the demands of a baby, that it is pretty much full on, but having worked in his industry before I can understand the pressures of his job, and I’d hate him to come home to a pig sty with nothing planned for dinner... So it’s definitely a time thing, I may

not have a lot of spare time, but at least I'm at home to do it. Also I am reliant on his income, he supports us all very well so I take that into account too."

The model of time availability is one that at face value holds true, however it is not until one looks deeper into the literature on multiple role women that you begin to see evidence contrary to its very premise. Time availability implies that there should be a strong association between the number of hours a wife works outside the home, and the number of hours she spends doing housework (Greenstein, 2000). Virtually all literature surrounding this issue suggests that while employed women do spend a decreased amount of time engaged in domestic duties, such differences are minor (Greenstein, 2000). However, the fact that women attribute the division of labour within their homes to the availability of time does make it an important consideration, one that perhaps suggests women with more flexible roles, potentially that of student, are more open to, and therefore impacted by, the time availability perspective.

Since she began studying, Frances reported that there has been a slight change in the division of labour within her home, but attributes a sense of guilt to her remaining as primarily responsible for domestic duties.

"I don't think I have let them change. I feel so guilty. Regarding the childcare, he takes the kids off one day on the weekend, so that has probably changed."

Frances's description of how feelings of guilt have resulted in her remaining primarily responsible for household tasks is also not uncommon. Allen & Hawkins (1999) found that such feelings of guilt, along with regret and ambivalence, prevent mothers from seeking a more collective arrangement between themselves and their husbands, as they often see themselves as neglecting their most central role. Further support for this finding is provided by Younes & Asay (1998) who found that women believe their first obligation and commitment was to their family, with concern for their children dominating the thought process. This provides a potential explanation as to why Frances has made a conscious effort to maintain similar levels of division as prior to her involvement in study.

Sarah explains how she has primary responsibility for domestic duties, however admits her husband does offer to help when he feels it's necessary. Sarah, like many multiple role women, believes that her role of student is one she has taken on in addition to her many others.

"I probably do most of it... I don't mind doing it, but generally it's out of necessity. My husband does a bit of housework when he is feeling extremely guilty, but generally he sits on the computer. I read something the other day that said men believe that they are staying out of the way by sitting on the computer... My husband probably picked up a little bit [after I started studying], I've just really taken on another huge role."

Sarah's description is common among multiple role women. Her own acknowledgement of having taken on an additional role describes perfectly the situation facing the majority of women occupying multiple roles. This further confirms the finding by Prummer (2000) that 'for women who already bear the main workload in the private sphere, studying is nearly always an additional burden.'

It has been stated by researchers that education has the potential to have a liberating affect on women's attitudes towards the division of labour within their homes, with younger, more highly educated women holding more egalitarian attitudes. (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Apparala, Reifman & Munsch, 2003) From the descriptions provided it is evident that this is not so for this group of women, who see their families and their children as the dominant fixtures within their lives, ones which take precedence, and for whom they continuously strive to provide for, whether it be emotionally, physically or financially. Pittman & Solheim (1996) stated that time spent on 'housework, including childcare, is not the product of a static contract, but a dynamic decision-making process sensitive to the social environment.' It is believed that the descriptions given by these women also provide support for this claim. The notion of continuously juggling childcare with study especially illustrates the need by these women to have flexibility in their household arrangements, ones that will ultimately allow for success in their multiple roles. Issues surrounding the

benefits and success of combining multiple roles are subsequently presented as the next organising theme.

4.6 THE CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS OF MULTIPLE ROLES

When asking the women involved in this study if they felt they enjoyed their multiple roles, there was a general consensus adhering to this. Despite this overall sense of satisfaction however, the women also highlighted what they perceived to be their biggest sources of pressure. I came to see that experiencing pressure in one form or another is an inevitable consequence of occupying multiple roles. Many of the women stated that the biggest source of pressure was the lack of time, leaving them feeling that all their resources had been stretched, impacting both time spent with their children, and time spent studying

Angela describes the pressure of time simply, and in a fashion perfectly depicting her situation.

“Always the clock. The time thing. I am always running, can never stop to chat.”

Time is also a source of pressure for Frances, most importantly a lack of time available to spend with her children.

“Time, time with the kids more. Sometimes the video gets put on too much. I wonder how many times I would say in a week ‘mummy’s just a bit busy right now’ if I wasn’t doing all this.”

For Genevieve the lack of time is also associated with feelings of pressure when her work commitments overflow and impact on time she would usually spend with her children.

“I sometimes feel that my children are missing out on me... when I need to go to things in evenings, or I need to be away and it all mounts up and it goes beyond the 3 days [I’m

supposed to work] a week I run into trouble. I am lucky if I get a day a week with my kids.”

Doreen also feels that her biggest source of pressure comes from a lack of quality time to spend with her son, labelling her feelings as guilt.

“The only pressure I feel I guess is the one where I feel guilty about quality time with [my son]... Even though I know he is well rounded and a social little boy, sometimes I wonder if I should give him more one-on-one attention.”

For Frances, Genevieve and Doreen the identification that a lack of time prevents them from spending as much quality time with their children as they would desire is not uncommon in working, and other multiple role women. The feeling of guilt as described by Doreen is attributable to a mother’s outside commitments which prevent them from fulfilling what both society and themselves perceive to be their primary role and therefore responsibility – that of mother. This belief further supports what Weber (1999) suggested, that ‘children are the centre-point around which their mother’s life revolves.’ The identification regarding the importance of time in the lives of these mothers is consistent with other findings on sources of strain as experienced by multiple role women. Rankin (1993) found that time and the constraints on its use, including organising and scheduling activities, was the major stressor most frequently cited by the women in her study.

Brenda attributes her experience with the lack of time as a time management issue, one that involves ensuring she is all things to all people.

“Time management and quality time with family is hard. It is a case of being all things to all people. Making sure everybody gets a piece of me.”

Anne also qualifies time management and a keen sense of organisation as key to her success in juggling multiple roles.

“There is a pressure to be able to juggle everything and just get assignments done without taking anything away from my role as a mother and trying to keep a balance. It is a time management thing. It is being organised. I start assignments a lot earlier than my other student friends do. I have to be aware of getting things done. The more pressure I am getting from university, the more pressure it is as a mother and it reflects on and impacts everyone so I have just got to try and keep all that in check.”

Farhang (1999) found that organisational and time management skills were important internal resources on which busy women rely to balance the demands of occupying multiple roles. These issues were also ones identified by the women involved in this particular study as contributing to the level of pressure experienced with regards to time, its availability and their use of it. This is reflected in Anne’s description of how her achievements are attributable to her ability to keenly organise her study, assignment work and motherhood. Edwards (1993) came to a similar conclusion, stating that organisation was the key to dealing with multiple roles successfully in that it reduced feelings of guilt, such as those described by Doreen previously.

While most of the women involved reported at least some desire for their level of responsibility in either their home or work environments to change, interestingly it is the role of study, the role taken in addition to that of motherhood, homemaker and worker, that the women reported the least desire to relinquish.

Anne describes how her commitment to her son has meant she has never felt like dropping her role as a student.

“I have never got to the point where I wanted to do that [quit studying]. I am quite committed to finishing and I keep telling myself that it is not going to last forever, because I think studying is easier in a way with a preschooler, because when you are busy you are busy and when you are not, you are not. There are months over the summer and times where I am pretty free.”

The level of commitment by these women to their student roles was universally high. It is believed that this high degree of commitment is strongly related to the high levels of satisfaction that each of these women described in their multiple roles resulting in their reluctance to consider 'dropping' this role from their busy schedules. Support for this finding is given by Hirsch & Rapkin (1986) who found that high levels of satisfaction acted as important criteria in one's success and ability to manage multiple roles. Hirsch & Rapkin (1986) also suggested the importance of such personal satisfaction in one's roles as linked to better overall mental health. As Killien & Brown (1987) state that women who take on outside roles do so in addition to their previously existing roles, it is further believed that such high levels of satisfaction is attributable to the fact that these women freely chose their additional role as a student, and the responsibilities that went with it. Denise describes her satisfaction with her current roles, and explains that all the roles she occupies, especially study, have been her own choice.

"I am very fortunate. I have chosen all the roles. I am happily married, love my children and get to go to university which is definitely my choice. I like doing it. I am very fortunate. I have a full life, and the more you do the more you get done. I like coming to university because it makes me aspire to the people that I am surrounded by... It balances me... I would never flag study; I would be so disappointed in myself. It is not a consideration."

Like Denise, Lucy reports total satisfaction with her current roles. She explains that the flexibility she enjoys enables her to accommodate all her roles.

"I do not think of either role as a burden. I think 'this is the number of hours I have in a day, this is as much as I could do'... No one has forced me to do them... If I feel I need to spend more time with my son, I take him for a coffee before daycare. I am flexible, if I want to do something with him, I can pick him up earlier and go and watch my other son doing tennis or judo. He really enjoys crèche and I do not feel guilty, because he is happy."

For Sarah, having multiple roles is a personal decision. She explained how a previous work position, and her contribution to that position, made it impossible for her to distance herself completely from her working role.

“I tend to take up the roles myself. I’m a sucker for punishment... I really wanted to carry on my contact with my working role because I had an autonomous role at work, and if I left it completely I knew the person who I would leave it to would destroy it, as bad as that is, so I decided to try and keep involved with the work, and it has been really, really good and since I started studying it actually cut down quite a lot. But yeah, every role I have undertaken, I’ve undertaken on my own accord, and I enjoy every role that I do.”

Like the other mothers above, Genevieve explains that dropping a role is not an option for her, although she does describe that at times she is unsure of her choices and feels the need to justify what she is aiming to achieve.

“I don’t want to drop any of my roles. I would like to be able to do all of them and I would like to be comfortable that my children would be well rounded, emotionally stable children. You do have that debate whether you should be a working mother and put your child into daycare, let alone a studying mother as well. Will your children suffer because of it? There is always an internal debate. You need to be able to justify it to yourself to be able to continue with what you are doing.”

With the recognition of the continuously busy schedules of these women in mind, I later asked the women ‘what, if anything, they would change about occupying multiple roles?’ Surprisingly, as noted above, the reduction of a role was not an option for the majority of women. Instead many women envisaged that support in the form of someone to help around the home would make a marked difference to their experiences as multiple role women by enabling them to have more quality time, both for themselves and with their children. For example Doreen stated:

“I would have someone do the housework and the grocery shopping so I could then have more quality time either to myself or [my son].”

Angela also described a desire for a housekeeper, and went so far as to justify how she would go about earning extra money to finance this luxury.

“Some people have cleaners, I would like one. Things get messy. I do a bit of private tutoring occasionally. I can work for one hour tutoring and pay a cleaner for 2 hours cleaning. I think it would be more efficient to tutor for an hour and pay a cleaner. Yes, I would change that.”

Sally also admits a housekeeper would make the world of difference to the way she spends her time, however states financially this really isn't a viable option.

“If I could change anything about all my roles I would like to get more help with the more mundane stuff in my life like housekeeping, but money doesn't allow for that at the moment. Now that I'm a mother, I wouldn't change that for anything, and study is my dream really so I wouldn't change that either, so yeah, a housekeeper would be nice.”

It has been suggested that a spouse's level of participation in household tasks and childcare is related to the levels of stresses and strains, and therefore satisfaction, experienced by multiple role women (Piechowski, 1992). It was therefore surprising that instead of stating a desire for increased participation from their spouses and partners, the women involved favoured an increase in the level of paid domestic help they obtained. While pressures of combining multiple roles are apparent, and the women occupying such roles admit to their existence, these same women also state that the benefits of multiple roles far outweigh the costs to their physical and mental well-being (Piechowski, 1992; Miller, 1996; Weber, 1999).

For Sarah the benefits of combining motherhood and studying came from what she describes as the 'reactivation of her brain.'

“I think they are actually beneficial for my health, because as I say ever since I’ve been studying my brain has sort of reactivated which is really nice. I don’t like working on a level when I can’t think straight for very long. So no, the studying and the parenthood has been a really good combined role.”

Brenda also reports the benefits as being keeping herself busy and her mind continually active.

“I’d say all these roles benefit me. It keeps me busy and my mind active and there is not time to dwell on things. As long as I don’t try and fit too much into a day, then I stay well as well.”

For Sally the satisfaction and rewards from combining multiple roles comes from her feeling as though she is bettering herself for her family.

“It does not impede my health, it helps my well-being, as I feel like I am achieving and making a difference to my family.”

A variety of rewards of occupying multiple roles have been identified through various research projects. For the women involved in this study, the personal reward of self-fulfilment achieved through both learning and feeling a sense of achievement, was prominent. It is believed that the identification and recognition of such rewards and benefits by the women themselves, increases their satisfaction over their occupation of multiple roles. It is therefore this satisfaction that acts as a defence to experiencing negative mental and physical health outcomes. This was also the conclusion drawn by Miller (1996) in a study involving employed mothers which stated that a rewarding and satisfying job had a buffering effect on the psychological distress experienced by these women. A similar finding was identified by Kopp & Ruzicka (1993) who found that women in multiple roles perceive themselves to be happier as perhaps having multiple roles allows women to ‘shrug off’ the less desirable aspects of some of their roles, allowing them to focus more on the positive, rewarding aspects instead.

“Definitely it is of benefit... There is a system and not everything in the system has to be perfect for the system to function properly.”

The above description provided by Lucy regarding the implications of occupying her roles summarises perfectly what both researchers and women themselves believe to be true of combining multiple roles. The fact that Lucy recognises that not everything has to be perfect for the system to function implies that during the process of managing multiple roles there are times when allowances and compromises need to be made. The effects of spillover are presented as the next organising theme.

4.7 THE INEVITABILITY OF SPILLOVER

Spillover has been described as existing when experiences in one arena potentially moderate the relationship between experiences in a second arena and psychological distress, the underlying assumption being that attitudes and behaviour in one area carry-over and predict attitudes and behaviour in other areas (Barnett, 1994; Campbell & Campbell, 1994). While there exists growing evidence that stress can be transmitted from one situation to another, thus magnifying its effects, there also exists growing recognition that rewards too, can accumulate across roles (McBride, 1990). For the studying mothers involved in this research project the spillover from study into motherhood, or vice versa, was not only common, but seemingly inevitable.

Sally describes her situation.

“I try and keep the study and motherhood separate. I can’t study when the kids are around and I feel I owe them my time undisturbed. But spillover is pretty much going to happen, if I’m stressed over study then that will influence my children, and if they are unhappy about something then generally I am unhappy too... I find it hard to swap from the study mindset to the mother mindset; part of me is always worrying about the other thing when I’m involved in something else.”

For Genevieve the effects of spillover are somewhat frustrating. While she endeavours to have everything running smoothly she finds work commitments especially, often draw her attention away from her children, thereby impacting on time they would normally spend together.

“I do try and keep them separate. Work is work, study is study, and being a mum is being a mum... . The study is the first that suffers and that annoys me, frustrates me. I would like to think I put my children first, but I don’t think I do.”

Like Genevieve, Anne makes a conscious effort to keep her study separate from her time spent with her son. She does recognise however that inevitably the effects of one do spillover onto the other. Anne explains how motherhood is her most important role, and that if she felt the need, she would drop her other roles to concentrate on her son.

“I do try and keep them separate as best I can, so while I’m at university I put everything into that, and then my son’s time is really precious and when I am at home, I put all my energies into him. The more pressure that I have here, the more likely it is to spillover. I rely on doing work when my son is sleeping at night. If he is not going to bed as he should, then I get quite tense. If I am lying there with him, I am thinking ‘I need to be doing my study.’ It is my time for study... As long as I am on top of everything I find I can just switch off, but if I am feeling under pressure, I tend to not be able to switch off so easily... I put the most important role in my life as being a mother and all the other roles would have to disappear if it got to the point where I couldn’t do everything. I do want to finish my studies, so that is also very important. It would take a lot for me to pull out of studying. It is something that is going to benefit my son anyway.”

For Sally, Genevieve and Anne the recognition that they are continuously thinking about aspects of their other roles while actively engaged in another is common in multiple role women. It was found by Martin et al. (1981, cited in Edwards, 1993) that the women involved in their study were determined to ‘fulfil their roles as wives/mothers as well as to remain industrious students.’ They stated that this was achieved by ‘organising their days

so that all the different demands were met with a high degree of motivation and determination.’ It was also suggested by Martin et al. (1981, cited in Edwards, 1993) that the very reason women experience ‘conflict’ within, and between their roles was due to the fact that their student roles require attitudes and behaviours that are inconsistent with traditional female spouse and parental roles. As stated by Campbell & Campbell (1994) ‘there is an implicit assumption that an individual is motivated to fulfil all her roles well, however both physical and psychological resource limitations require her to invest less energy in each role in order to satisfy (albeit at a lower level) all roles.’ Campbell & Campbell (1994) describe the reasoning for this outcome as follows: “a person’s energy and time availability are limited; and that a person attempting to fill two (or more) time- and energy- intensive roles will be less available for either one.” While Sally, Genevieve and Anne all report a conscious effort to keep the areas of studying and motherhood separate, it was found that this effort is not always exercised. Like Edwards (1993) I found that while some women sought to ensure that their education affected their private lives as little as possible, others actively worked on the integration of the two.

Denise described how she believes that you cannot separate out the effects of either her motherhood role or her study role. In fact Denise would prefer they did spillover and influence one another as she hopes the skill of multitasking is one that influences her daughters into achieving more.

“I don’t think you can. They spillover. I had hoped they would. I really hoped that myself going to university and multitasking will influence my girls. I want them to see that you need to do these things. You don’t want to leave it till your Mum’s age, but even if you do, you can do it. It helps my husband have more respect for me too... I run to university... My kids do suffer a bit when I am doing assignments. I am constantly saying ‘Mummy is studying,’ ‘leave me alone,’ ‘have to do my homework.’ My daughter would like me to do mother-help which I can’t do. I try to balance my time.”

Patricia described how she believes she is past trying to rigidly keep the different areas of her life separate.

“I have given up trying to keep them separate, it kind of just amalgamates into one hectic schedule, cause trying to keep them separate is just a waste of time... I do set aside time for my study time and my [daughters] time. Weekends when she is awake that’s it, the books go away. There is no point, she destroys them all to start with, um, but also she has got to have some quality time with me and that’s when we go and do things, go to the park and do all that type of thing, that kids like to do... I have tried to set her down and say ‘you go play with that and mummy is going to read her books, heres your books, heres Mummy’s books’ she will sit right up on top of my book and say ‘read this to me Mummy, read this to me Mummy,’ I’ll say ‘how about I read this to you’ and she will say ‘no, read this to me Mummy.’”

For Frances, it is her behaviour that she feels spills over into other areas of her life, more often than not affecting the behaviour of her children, her husband and her friends.

“I don’t think you can [keep my roles separate]. They definitely spillover... My bad behaviour is usually reflected in the kid’s bad behaviour. Always actually. When I am stressed, the kids are really bad too. My husband is not talking to me and that is probably because I have ignored him. I haven’t heard from my friends this week, probably because I haven’t had time to even ring them. Definitely they spillover... I have to mentally and forcefully switch it over. I have to have the books in front of me and think ‘this is who I am for the next hour.’ You cannot really do it while the kids are at home because they are constantly reminding you that you are not who you are for this hour. Even if you lock yourself away, you can still hear them. You know that the other role is just outside the door waiting for you”

Frances’s description of how her levels of stress and her subsequent behaviour transfer over to her family and friends is a common finding of studies focusing on the issue of spillover. Campbell & Campbell (1994) stated that families of multiple role women are often subjected to increased stress, impacting their own behaviours, as new role relationships have to be negotiated and refined. Therefore it is believed reasonable to expect behaviour,

both positive and negative, not only to impact and spillover into other spheres in one's lives, but also to spillover and affect the people within those spheres.

An unexpected finding derived from the descriptions of the women involved in this study reflected not the stress or rewards that spilled-over from one role to another as commonly reported in other studies, but instead the different mindset and knowledge they adopted through their various roles. Sarah described how she finds that the biggest impact of her multiple roles is the learning from one sphere that she is able to carry over to other spheres as well.

“I can't go anywhere without sort of analysing people and what they do with their children, which is really very bad... I'm now looking at things a lot differently than I was before, because of what I'm learning from my study, so yeah, they do overlap a lot... Maybe it's my learning style that I have, is that by combining them all it like, I gain more, I learn more...”

Like Sarah, Kathy too finds that it is mostly her learning that impacts onto other areas of her life.

“I know I've said this before, in that I'm very lucky not to have a great deal of pressure on me, other than my daughter and my study, so I really get to enjoy both roles, and I don't mind if they merge somewhere in the middle, but I do find that I analyse people all the time, not necessarily in a bad way, but I'm always looking at how people interact with their kids that sort of thing, I think that is very much the psychology background in me... when people ask me what I'm studying I always hesitate before I say psychology, as they always make the not so wrong assumption that I'm judging them... But definitely I think that's where my roles impact each other.”

From the descriptions of the experiences of these women it is clear that the effects of combining multiple roles inevitably spillover from one sphere to another. What can also be seen is a general sense of acceptance regarding this occurrence. One potential explanation

for this is reflected in the very nature of the student role. It was found by Wortman, Biernat & Lang (1991) that even though academics in general scored lower on scales of boundedness (i.e. keeping their work within bounds) they scored significantly higher on the flexibility scale when compared to businesswomen. Barnett (1994) came to a similar conclusion suggesting that fulltime employed mothers were more vulnerable to negative spillover effects as they had less ability of reducing their work schedules to cope with family stressors. It is believed that despite the high levels of commitment the women involved in this study have to all of their roles, the feeling of flexibility in their schedules allows for movement and compromise, resulting in less negative spillover from study to family, or vice versa, ultimately benefiting their health and well-being. The notion of well-being is presented as the next organising theme.

4.8 THE MULTIFACETED NATURE OF WELL-BEING

The notion of well-being was one that caused many of the women involved to ask the self-reflective question of “do I have that?” I asked each of the women what well-being meant to them, and asked if they believed they had this in their lives. Despite most women stating that they indeed had elements of well-being, they were aware that there was room for improvement if only time and resources allowed. As suggested by Weber (1999) to understand the daily struggles facing multiple role women, and the impact this has on their mental health, it is important to understand what well-being means to such women.

For Lucy balance is the key to well-being, she describes her understanding of this concept simply.

“Physically and emotionally... I think so, it is balanced as much as I can.”

Frances’s description of well-being also encompassed the notion of balance. She describes this below.

“Peace and feeling like you are on top of it. In control would be how I would want it to be. Everything is where it should be, everything is working and we are functioning and we are happy and fulfilled. Physically and emotionally.”

Brenda describes what she perceives to be well-being, something she, like many of the women, attributed to balance and keeping things in perspective.

“Managing yourself both physically and emotionally to cope with what you have chosen to do in life. You have to balance everything that you have chosen to do, so that it doesn’t affect you negatively, either physically or emotionally... I do think I have well-being... I think my well-being is good and I have everything in perspective.”

Like Brenda, Kathy places emphasis on having balance in her life and having everything in perspective. Like many of the women, Kathy describes how a bit of fresh air and exercise makes all the difference.

“Being happy, balanced and having everything in perspective. Eating well, having regular exercise that sort of thing. There is definitely an emotional and physical side I think, I’d say the effects of these spillover onto each other too... I think generally I have well-being... I’ve never been much of an exerciser, but a walk every now and then seems to work for me, though to be honest I should probably go more often than I do.”

While also referring to the importance of balance, Anne describes how she believes looking after her physical well-being impacts positively onto other areas of her life, much like was described by Kathy above. Anne also attributes the nature of her course to her attention and focus to her personal well-being.

“Physical, emotional, social. Having good balance. I find I try and keep fit and healthy, and I go to the gym and do aerobics and play netball. By keeping up my physical health and well-being, it spills over to my emotional state. It is a good stress release... Yes, I have a good balance and as a Social Work trainee I am really aware of my health and my

limits and doing self-care when I need to and seek support when I need to. I know when I need it.”

Goldwag (1979, cited in Kenney, 2000) stated that health is a natural process of harmonious balance within oneself, others and the environment. It was therefore pertinent that the women involved in this study also recognised the notion of balance as key to their own, and their families, well-being. It is believed by researchers that as our daily lives continue to become more chaotic and complex, many women experience an overload of stressors that weaken this inner balance believed to be so important in maintaining well-being (Kenney, 2000). Younes and Asay (1998) also found that despite the recognised importance of this notion of balance in one’s life, the women graduate students in their study, despite perceiving their degrees as fulfilling, described a ‘myriad’ of negative emotions and struggles with regards to trying to achieve such balance between their worlds. I too found that many women believed their personal well-being was not all it could be. These women recognised the daily struggles they faced to achieve order and harmony for both themselves and their families often left little time for personal indulgence in such activities as exercise, something they perceived to be central in having complete well-being in their lives.

While having similar perceptions on the term well-being itself Angela recognises and describes how her personal well-being is not all it could be.

“Emotional, physical, mental, spiritual... I do [have well-being], but I don’t do enough exercise. I am going to address that. I take the walking bus one day a week, that’s all.”

Like Angela, Sarah also sees something missing from her experiencing well-being

“I think it incorporates the person being relaxed, healthy, getting a lot of exercise and eating right, feeling mentally good... No I don’t have that, I’m not healthy and I’m not getting enough exercise.”

For Sally, like both Angela and Sarah, having the opportunity to exercise, she believes would provide the extra boost she needs to enhance her personal well-being.

“Healthy body and mind... Having plenty of good wholesome food, exercise, stimulation, spiritual fulfilment, peace. I think I have most of these, well maybe not exercise, but my study certainly keeps my mind stimulated, my kids keep me on the ball, we eat well, so if only I could find the time to exercise I’d be right, that would provide the extra oomph I need.”

As a number of the women involved believed that there was always room for, and indeed need for, improvement in their perceived well-being, I then asked them what they found to be the best way they cope with any pressure or stress that they experienced. While all of the women recognised the multifaceted nature of well-being, including aspects of emotional and mental health, surprising it was the area of physical well-being that most believed could be improved. Despite the many differing personalities and situational circumstances of these women, similar coping mechanisms were identified; the most common was that of exercise and fresh air.

For Genevieve regular exercise is a big part of her life. She also explains that time out for a run, as opposed to time out for study, is both understood and encouraged by her husband.

“Exercise – another facet of my multiple roles is I am involved in adventure racing and multi-sport and I usually do an event once a month. I do a bit of training for that. That is a stress relief and something that I do with my husband. If I say to my husband ‘I need ½ an hour to go for a run’ he says ‘great.’ But if I say ‘I need ½ an hour for study’, he says ‘so that means I have to look after the children.’ He can understand the exercise side of things, but can’t understand the study side. That is where we have a battle.”

Anne explains how exercise is her ideal way of coping.

“Exercise – going to the gym, taking my son on a bike ride. Fresh air. Getting away from the books – anything outside.”

Kathy attributes fresh air and a bit of exercise as a perfect way to relax, and highlights a common tool for exercise utilised by many of the mothers with young children.

“I’d like to say exercise, but I think its more really just fresh air, I’m terrible at exercise per say. But having my daughter young enough to pop in the buggy and go is great, usually we don’t get far, just to the park, she watches the ducks or sleeps in the buggy and I sit on the bench and relax, on a nice day that’s very relaxing.”

Like Kathy, Brenda explains how a walk out with her baby and buggy proves invaluable and also provides some much wanted quality time.

“Just keep getting on with it. Walking and spending time with my baby out in the buggy.”

While Doreen also describes fresh air and a walk with her son in his buggy as a great way to unwind, she also describes that sometimes it is a night out with friends that makes all the difference.

“I like to keep fit. A good walk in the fresh air with the buggy. Sometimes a night out with my girlfriends and a wine or four is what it takes. It’s different each time.”

While Lucy believes her regular commitment to exercise is a great way to get time for herself, she also attributes that time spent with her children can also provide the necessary distraction.

“Spending time with the children. I exercise 5-6 times a week. I go to gym at 6am as it’s the only time I have. I enjoy doing 20 kilometre walks when time permits. I like to go to the swimming pool sometimes.”

The descriptions provided by the women above present an interesting finding, one I believe to be particularly relevant to any multiple role women with pre-school aged children. The demands of time and the frustration regarding the lack of flexible and informal childcare for multiple role women are well-documented in the literature. It is also noted by Farhang (1999) that multiple role women do not adequately take care of their own emotional and physical needs, with their priorities in descending order being: children, career, spouse and finally self. It is therefore believed that exercise such as walking is a practical source of relief for such women given the ease of being able to take young children in buggies, providing an outing and entertainment for the children, while at the same time providing mothers with some much needed time to engage in health enhancing behaviour.

Sally describes her ideal form of stress relief to have time purely for herself, away from the everyday hassles and worries. She also explains that reflecting on how far she has come, and on what she has to look forward to, keeps her going.

“The best way to cope is to have time for just me with no niggling thoughts or guilt trips. Time to get this inner peace that I crave. Having no financial worries would help make this easier for me, but that’s not possible at the moment. Maybe someday it will be and that is why I am doing what I am doing, to make it possible. Nobody could help me do this. It is something I can do for myself and I fell that is what I am doing. It keeps me going and every semester I can tick off another milestone on my way to a more fulfilled life.”

Like many of the studying mothers involved Sally places a great deal of pride in the work that she achieves, something she believes acts as a motivator when pressure is felt. Younes & Asay (1998) found a similar occurrence in their study, in which the women who based on the extensive amount of time and resources they invested, clearly valued education, and saw it as a vehicle to personal self-fulfilment and professional advancement. Sally’s desire for quality personal time is also extremely common in multiple role women. However it is often a desire, and a need, that is put at the end of a long list of priorities. It is a common occurrence for multiple role women to place the needs and wants of their families well

before their own, believing that their first obligation and commitment is indeed to their families (Tingey & Kiger, 1996; Younes & Asay, 1998; Kenney, 2000). Farhang (1999) believes it is this disinclination to set aside time to engage in health enhancing behaviours for themselves that may potentially lead to negative health consequences for many multiple role women. It was also identified that the women found relief in the knowledge that they were not alone in prioritising in this manner, that other women were also juggling the demands of their families with their own needs and desires. The feelings of camaraderie as expressed by the women are presented as the final organising theme.

4.9 FEELINGS OF CAMARADERIE

It became apparent through talking with these women, that they believed there existed an informal network of studying mothers. While not actively seeking out other like minded people, they sought comfort in the fact that they were not alone, that they were not the only ones trying to juggle what was personally important to them, with the needs and wants of their families.

Sally describes that she finds knowing of other mothers in her situation a form of support, for Sally this comes in the form of inspiration.

“I think every mother who studies does it for a reason, and I would imagine those reasons are just as important to them as mine are to me. I think circumstances play a big part, but generally I think we are in the same boat, especially other solo mothers. I would imagine friends and family are generally supportive, I would imagine finances are a bit of a struggle, and that they experience a bit of guilt over whether they are spending enough time with their kids, as they try and do the best by them. I think, hope, that’s standard. It is nice to know there are other people out there in that boat with me, it’s encouraging. Just knowing there are others doing the same thing as you is quite inspirational I think, all those mothers trying to provide the best for their kids, I think it’s great.”

Brenda also describes how she finds knowing that she is not the only one juggling these roles reassuring.

“Just by talking to other mothers from the crèche at the institute, I know I’m not the only one doing this, that’s quite reassuring really. I suppose it’s kind of a informal support thing; we have been known to help each other out occasionally, whether it’s picking a book up from the library or just having a coffee. Having a gripe about things always helps and you don’t feel bad about doing it either because they understand, and you get over it soon enough and carry on.”

Kathy also explains that she finds support in other mothers experiencing the same challenges in combining the roles of motherhood and study.

“I only know two other Mums who study, being pretty much extramural I don’t meet that many others. But I know they share the same dilemmas as me. I also know they share the same feelings of achievement and satisfaction in what they are doing. They are my comrades.”

In Kathy’s simple description of her friends as comrades, she draws reference to the notion of camaraderie. This I believe, describes what a number of the women involved feel when referring to other mothers in this same situation. They find solace in knowing that other women share their inspirations, motivations, desires, and to varying degrees, their experiences. These women described that a simple, informal chat with other mothers often provided some much needed support and reassurance. While this is not a common issue explored in the literature, support for such a notion was found. Younes & Asay (1998) found that the women involved in their study expressed the need for support and connection with other female students who share their similar struggles.

Doreen feels she finds support in other studying mothers, so much so a group of friends even share a motto. She also describes how she believes that all studying mothers

experience the same daily issues, but acknowledges that these are perhaps experienced at differing degrees.

“I guess the childcare one is pretty much the same and the studying and motherhood too, but everybody’s circumstances are different. Some people have it harder than me, some easier. I guess if you had more children and a husband and a mortgage and everything else, the demands are greater. But I think generally everyone has the same issues, just maybe to differing degrees. I think if you are struggling there are people willing to chat to you and provide perhaps a bit of extra support; I find that at crèche at least. When I pick my son up I have a quick chat to other Mums, we all have the same issues, there are a couple of us Mums who have a coffee every now and then, we are always saying ‘all for one, one for all,’ it’s a little joke that lets you know they have the same issues.”

Angela describes how her husband’s support provides for a differing context of participation from that of a friend’s.

“Yes, lots of people find it quite busy. My husband is very supportive, whereas a friend’s husband gets very dodgy. So that is different for me.”

While Frances believes she is a typical case of a studying mother, she too appreciates women in her situation have differing degrees of support, and therefore differing degrees of difficulty.

“I look at my friend who is studying and is a solo mum and her son is in fulltime care paid for by the Government, and she has a boyfriend that helps out and I think that’s kind of nice, a solo mum and have it all paid for. I do think that all Mums have varying degrees of difficulty depending on what type of support structures they have in place. I think I am fairly typical though, but it does vary a bit.”

As can be seen from the descriptions above, a common feeling expressed by these women was that while they believed most studying mothers would experience the same difficulties,

they also believed that in fact women participate in their roles under different circumstances and contexts. This again follows the findings of David et al. (1996) who suggested that despite the final outcome looking similar to that of others, mothers have arrived at that point through making different decisions, under different circumstance and through relying on different forms of support, noting that a mothers involvement in schooling is a continual process of choice-making within constraints.

During our conversations I found the women asking me for reassurance and encouragement by asking if their experiences matched those of their peers, if they were experiencing similar situations to those of other studying mothers. This, I believe illustrates and provides support for my choice in approaching this research from a feminist perspective, one that enabled me to share with those involved, informal and clarifying answers to their questions.

4.10 SUMMARY

The themes acknowledged in this chapter represent areas of significance, as identified through the shared experiences of these women. These eight organising themes represent the desires, motivations and difficulties each of these women encounter as they continue to manage their multiple roles, especially those of student and mother. While these were the two main roles of consideration in this research project, all of the women involved actively pursued further responsibilities by way of other time consuming and demanding roles, such as wife, incomer earner and volunteer. While each of the women described personal reasons for their decision to study at this time in their lives, it should be recognised that in choosing to do so, none of the women dropped any of their previous responsibilities in order to take on their new student role. For this reason, issues surrounding childcare, support networks, division of labour, and personal well-being become pertinent, these being reflected in each of the organising themes that emerged from the descriptions of their experiences as students and mothers. What can be seen from these descriptions is their ambition and drive to overcome barriers to their educational success. While their personal

needs are acknowledged, all of the women work continuously to ensure their families remain the central focus of their lives. These women have recognised their own need for achievement and self-fulfilment and aim to balance this with their other roles and associated responsibilities.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

5.1 CONTRIBUTIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research explored the experiences of women combining the roles of student and mother to young children (aged 0-5 years). Investigations into women and multiple role occupancy are by no means new, however unlike much of the existing research this project investigated the relationship between mothering and study. While the criteria for participation in this project was based on 3 factors, 1) being involved in formal tertiary study, either on a full-time or part-time basis, 2) being female, and 3) having a pre-school aged child (i.e. aged 0-5 years) all of the participants occupied more than simply these two roles. Many of the women also occupied the roles of wife, income earner, volunteer, daughter, sister, and friend to name just a few, each role having their own set of needs and subsequently requiring certain responsibilities of these women. During the research project the participants shared their motivations, desires and difficulties in combining these roles, their reasons for participating in tertiary education at this time in their lives, the impact they felt this had on their children and other personal relationships, their struggles in combining their responsibilities, and their feelings of achievement over their accomplishments.

The participants were studying towards an array of different degrees, each having their own personal justifications for doing so. For some of the women, their current courses were their first insight into higher education, for others studying at this level was not a new experience, however combining study with motherhood most commonly was. Through the descriptions given by these women, it was possible to identify the high level of success most were experiencing in combining motherhood and education. The identification of the eight organising themes enabled recognition of the significance these experiences held for the women themselves, to tertiary level institutions and to educators.

5.1.1 SIGNIFICANCE TO INDIVIDUALS

Reasons for studying - The birth of my child and personal self-fulfilment

For the women involved, the birth of their children appeared to have a profound effect on their decisions to study, not just for single mothers wanting to avoid welfare dependency, but for married mothers wanting to achieve something for themselves. This was not something I had identified within the literature. Most commonly this major life event (having a child) was described as a “turn around point,” giving these women both the intrinsic motivation and opportunity to fulfil their studying desires. Identifying their children as a source of influence with regard to their decision to study, lead these women to have greater respect and appreciation, not only for their children, but also for themselves as multiple role women. The descriptions given by the solo mothers of wanting to avoid welfare dependency show that these women are striving for, and achieving, independence. Economic independence is one of the principle reasons given by feminists who stress the importance of higher education for all women, regardless of age, race, and background (Edwards, 1993). It is through such self-motivated independence that women can secure their place within society, as women, mothers and educated individuals.

For the married women the birth of their children often coincided with a time in their lives when they felt the desire to engage in study, often resulting from a need for self-fulfilment. Most commonly, the birth of their children meant a re-evaluation of their roles, many of the women described a need to decide if their place in society was as a stay-at-home mum or as a working mum. While the majority of these women faced no pressure in their decision, it was often described that choosing to study enabled the best of both worlds for these women. The rigid schedules of full-time employment are noted as contributing to the pressures faced by working mothers (Wortman, Biernat & Lang, 1991; Barnett, 1994). By choosing the path of study these women were not confronted with the often inflexible demands of full-time employment allowing time to spend with their children as well as personal development and achievement. The ability to change assignment dates and miss classes did not go unnoticed by these women as being a beneficial element in combining motherhood and studying, as compared to motherhood and regular employment. For some

the decision to study meant a reduction in feelings of guilt which are commonly associated with utilising full-time childcare. This was illustrated by Anne, who stated the life of the student is one that allows for variation “I think studying is easier in a way ... because when you are busy you are busy, when you are not, you are not.” It was recognised by these women that the decision to study was not one that affected only themselves. All were well aware of the potential impacts their decision to study could have on their children, both beneficial and detrimental, and how they may be perceived by society. However for these women study provides an avenue for personal success, success as a mother and success as an individual.

All of the women described both personal and career reasons for their decision to study. While all recognised the importance education held for their futures, for many study came to represent a hobby, something they enjoy doing, which they are doing for their own reasons, and from which they derive great satisfaction and achievement, ultimately having a significant impact on their self-worth. The desire for self-fulfilment, as derived through their studies, was a common motivation for these women. These women gained more from their studies than simply a qualification; they also obtained an individual identity, one that is free from being simply someone’s mother, or someone’s wife. It is through their studies that these women engage in interactions with like-minded individuals, people who share both similar interests and the personal need to better themselves through education. This recognition of interacting with like minded people is evidence of the changing nature of the student population, one where diversity is the norm rather than the exception. For many of the women, studying meant what Patricia described as the ‘exercising of her brain,’ it provided a place and a time when they felt like individuals in their own right.

One potentially contradictory finding, which was not identified within the literature, pertains to the common feeling by these mothers that they did not fit into the ‘typical university culture.’ Traditionally, university cultures have been closely aligned with what has constituted a typical university student, one that is young, single and has few outside responsibilities. It is possible that perceptions of the university culture are as obsolete as definitions surrounding the typical university student, as they do not recognise the diversity

that increasingly exists among students, their demographics, their participatory contexts and their motivations. It is further believed that due to the multiple sources of responsibility these women face daily, feelings of being too busy and a perceived lack of understanding of this by their fellow students reflects that the changing nature of the student population is not always recognised, not even by the students themselves.

Childcare

All of the mothers involved in this study utilised some form of childcare. In most instances this involved formal childcare within a crèche or daycare facility. Overall, these women described immense satisfaction with their childcare arrangements. Most commonly, such satisfaction was described in terms of the benefits having such childcare provided to their children as well as to themselves. Most women believed that through crèche and daycare facilities, their children were enjoying increased age-appropriate stimulation, and developing enhanced social interaction skills. At the same time they were enjoying increased peace of mind knowing their children were not being deprived due to their own educational involvement.

While crèche and daycare facilities represented the primary providers of daycare for these mothers, often the help of family and friends was also utilised. It proved a common belief that through providing a mix of carers, their children would experience greater developmental opportunities and receive both group interaction and one-on-one attention. This finding of high satisfaction in childcare arrangements is one that contradicts what is commonly described within the literature surrounding working mothers (Piechowski, 1992; Rankin, 1993; Tingey & Kiger, 1996). While the childcare arrangements of working mothers have been described as one of the greatest sources of strain for these women, the flexibility that can be enjoyed in the role of student greatly reduces this outcome. While the mothers all proclaimed the satisfaction they had in their childcare providers, care must be taken not to ignore the need for the further enhancement of these services. Many of the women involved stated that various 'issues' regarding childcare were a source of frustration, something they believed the education providers themselves could help alleviate. It was suggested that tertiary institutions could be more supportive of parents

through providing accessible, affordable, flexible childcare facilities. This is a finding frequently cited in the literature.

A finding not commonly identified within the literature is that childcare providers, such as crèche and daycare staff, can be a source of support for studying mothers. While all of the women stated that this was not a place they had expected to find comfort and support, it was one they had indeed welcomed. This was found to be especially so for the on-campus childcare providers who were described as being understanding of the fact that their mothers are also students experiencing various levels of pressure throughout the year as they combine their study and mothering roles. It was evident that a great deal of respect and admiration existed for the dispositions and personalities of staff at the on-site crèche and daycare facilities. Tertiary institution childcare facilities have the explicit goal of providing care for the children of their students; it is not an intended function to also care for the mothers. However many descriptions were given of just how exactly this type of support was expressed. Accounts of advice over their children's eating, minor illnesses and sleeping patterns were common, along with information pertaining to the university campus, such as social events, car parking and reminders of important dates. As not all of the women were utilising on-campus childcare, it does raise the question of whether such women were placing themselves at a disadvantage in regards to their study, as off-site daycare facilities may not appreciate the intricate demands of the student role. What can be determined from this finding is the importance of having adequate provision of on-campus childcare facilities, one which would enable its utilisation by all students wishing to do so.

Social support & the division of labour

All participants described strong support networks upon which they relied. Commonly, support given by friends and family was shown through encouraging their decisions to study, pride in their achievements, and by husbands in particular, acceptance of, and flexibility in, the family routine. While some of the women described themselves as "pretty self-sufficient" they acknowledged that the help was there if they needed it. For the solo mothers in this study, social support was most often sought from family and friends. For the majority of married women involved, their husbands provided the main source of

emotional support and childcare during weekends, with informal weekday childcare support provided mainly by grandparents. More often than not, the husbands of the women involved accepted their wife's need to take time away from their children to study, and commonly provided entertainment outside of the home, allowing her to take this. The most common form of practical support offered, and readily accepted, was that of flexible on-call childcare. This was particularly noteworthy given that the lack of flexibility by formal childcare providers was identified as a main source of frustration for these women. While the majority relied on their support networks for childcare, emotional support was also readily offered. It is believed that on-call support, such as that described by many of the women, is important in reducing role-overload, ultimately aiding their success in multiple roles.

For the married women involved in this study, the division of labour within their homes was not an issue they placed a great deal of importance on. While they all reported unequal distribution of the household chores, including childcare, most reported their satisfaction over their current arrangements. Many justified their situations based on income, time, their own high standards, and even feelings of guilt. Similar to findings in other investigations (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Apparala, Reifman & Munsch, 2003), while these mothers did say a more equal share in household chores would be desirable, they also stated they were overall "happy with the current situation." From their descriptions regarding the division of labour within their homes, it was possible to identify that these women regard domestic duties as a personal responsibility, showing that their study is indeed in addition to their other responsibilities and therefore comes secondary to other family commitments. Despite proclaiming education 'liberates' women from their more traditional roles (Edwards, 1993) little support was found for an increase in egalitarian values surrounding the division of labour within the homes of these women. Instead, the very fact that these women perceive their unequal arrangements as fair reinforces their position as the primary provider of household duties.

Challenges and benefits of multiple roles

One long standing debate regarding the occupation of multiple roles is whether this is beneficial or detrimental to women's well-being. While all acknowledging that they experienced feelings of pressure and guilt in combining their roles, the women involved also explained that multiple role occupancy benefited their sense of well-being. For all of the women, the decision to study at this time in their lives was a personal choice. They chose this particular time because of opportunity and circumstance, and as a result of this each had an extremely high level of drive and commitment. This was reflected in the statements given by the women, describing that the role of study was not one they had considered relinquishing, or were willing to relinquish, in times of pressure. When asked what they perceived to be their biggest source of pressure in combining their roles, all of the women reported the lack of time, as their biggest stressor. This was not an unexpected result, issues surrounding time, the lack of time and the use of time, are commonly reported in the literature (Rankin, 1993). As a result time management and organisation become key issues in successfully occupying multiple roles. They also provide avenues for institutions, such as tertiary institutions, to further aid the success of their students by having available free student learning services focusing on these issues, and encouraging the learning of these skills. The financial cost of studying with young children was also often reflected upon. For the women in this study financial concerns centred on the cost of childcare, rather than the cost of fees or the difficulty of studying on their partner's income, part-time wages or Government assistance. Although studying at the tertiary level brought both time and financial pressures to these women, the desire to study was mostly intrinsically motivated, and therefore influenced by a positive and optimistic outlook. Overall their decision to combine study and motherhood was a positive experience, benefiting their overall health and well-being.

Spillover

Many participants believed that even if you make a conscious effort to keep multiple roles separate, inevitably the effects of these spillover and impact the other areas of one's life, whether it be time spent with children, time spent studying, their own behaviour, and that of their children. While it is widely acknowledged that stress can be transmitted and

spillover from one sphere of one's life onto another, there also exists increasing evidence that rewards too can accumulate across roles (McBride, 1990). It is for this reason that it is felt the women involved gain more from engaging in their multiple roles than they would from each role independently. The issue of organisation was given great importance in being able to manage multiple roles, and for some mothers the integration of their roles was not only deemed unavoidable but also actively encouraged. A key acknowledgement was made by Lucy, who stated "there is a system and not everything in the system has to be perfect for the system to function properly." However, it was not only stress, or rewards, that were found to spillover in the lives of these women. Many of the women involved expressed how their new found knowledge impacted their lives as a whole. From bringing up their own children, to observing other parents, and affecting their working roles, knowledge gained in one sphere was commonly found to transfer over into others. This was not an issue I had found within the literature.

The meaning of well-being

Given the descriptions by these women, it was evident that despite their strong aspiration to study to fulfil a personal goal, the needs and wants of their families most often took priority over their own desires. This act of giving precedence to one's family was not a surprising, or unexpected finding. It is believed that this is a direct result of gender roles as prescribed by society, and a women's feeling of obligation to comply with these whether it be consciously or unconsciously. Even though these women clearly choose this time in their lives to study, at no time did they place themselves before their families. Often the women described activities that most take for granted, such as exercise, reading for pleasure, personal time, and time for friends as luxuries. These were not often indulged in and commonly forgotten in everyday life. The infrequent indulgence in these 'luxury activities' were commonly expressed as ways of coping with any pressure or strain experienced. Being able to find time to exercise proved a great pressure release for these women, and due to the rarity that this was engaged in, exercise was also described as an element missing from the totality of their current well-being.

Camaraderie

The descriptions given by these women of not fitting into the typical university culture, as discussed previously, highlights that feelings of isolation are not uncommon among studying mothers. While they do not feel they 'fit' with the assumed majority, it became evident that there existed strong ties with other women combining motherhood and study. Through knowing of other women in similar situations many of the women involved recognised the support and assurance they received simply by acknowledging they are not alone in their journeys. A straightforward statement made by Kathy "they are my comrades" I believe encompasses what these women feel when talking and sharing stories with like women. While this form of support was not always actively pursued, it was most commonly found to exist among mothers meeting through crèche and daycare facilities. In addition to such daycare facilities providing a support network of their own, it was also found that they provided informal, spontaneous opportunities for social interactions to take place. However while it was found that opportunities for social interaction exist, such interaction was not always necessary to experience the feelings of camaraderie. These feelings of camaraderie came to represent an important form of encouragement on which these mothers could rely upon for reassurance, assistance and advice. Further potential impacts from achieving such feelings of support include the promotion of self-worth, increasing confidence in an environment where they feel like the minority, and increasing confidence to express opinions and develop as an individual. Despite pressures of time being an influential factor with regards to the frequency of social interactions, the observation of this form of support provides reason for tertiary institutions to focus on limiting unnecessary feelings of isolation by providing appropriate forums that may facilitate such friendship and camaraderie. The crèche provides an excellent example for studying mothers. The combating of isolation becomes a pertinent issue given the changing nature of the student population as a whole, where more minority groups are being represented on campus than ever before. The notion of camaraderie is not one currently explored in the literature surrounding multiple role women. However I believe that it holds great importance regarding the exploration into women's lives, the struggles they face, the desires that drive them, and the support upon which they rely.

5.1.2 SIGNIFICANCE TO EDUCATORS

The significance that this research holds for tertiary institutions can be found in the many areas identified as needing attention and subsequent improvement to better enable the success of their students. Though these women were attending a number of tertiary institutions, the majority attending Massey University, all of the women were positive about their studying experiences, especially with regard to the satisfaction they felt towards their particular courses. However lecture timetables, tutorials, compulsory computer labs, exam timetables and the lack of flexible childcare proved to be issues of concern to these women. As the majority of women had not studied at this level for a number of years, many found the transition from their other roles, such as wife and mother, to that of student difficult. Many of the women were unaware of available student learning services that may have aided their transition. Those that did know of their existence thought themselves too busy to add their involvement in these to their already busy schedules. Based on the above findings several suggestions are presented that are directed towards improving the experiences of women who study with young children.

- Tertiary institutions need to become increasingly aware and accepting of the changing nature of their student population (i.e.: a move away from the ‘traditional’ student).
- Tertiary institutions need to be understanding of the different needs of women students with young children, that study is in addition to their other roles and therefore the traditional definition of a student does not apply.
- Tertiary institutions need to be sensitive to the many contexts in which students participate in study and provide flexibility in course programmes, including flexible arrangements for learning and course completion.
- Tertiary institutions need to be aware of women students’ desires to gain meaning from both their studying and mothering roles, again by allowing flexibility in course programmes.
- Tertiary institutions should be aware of, and sensitive to, the above factors when developing class timetables, exam timetables, tutorials and computer labs.

- Tertiary institutions need to provide facilities for flexible, affordable childcare
- Tertiary institutions need to have an adequate provision of childcare facilities to meet the needs of all students requiring this service (i.e.: no waiting lists, appropriate facilities, professionally trained staff).
- Childcare services should also include after school care for school age children, including over school holiday periods (i.e.: after school programmes and holiday programmes)
- Tertiary institution personnel need to familiarise themselves with any policy information that may assist studying mothers, such as information regarding financial assistance, and advertise the availability of these in appropriate locations, eg: on-site crèches.
- Tertiary personnel need to actively promote student learning services to all students, again by advertising their availability in appropriate locations, and making these easily accessible and attainable, such as having comprehensive information sheets available and flexible appointment times.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

This study involved a group of 12 women who were actively involved in both studying and mothering roles. These women participated in this project voluntarily, and consequently represented a self-selected sample. As a result of this, a diverse population was not sampled as there was a lack of age, race and class differentials.

The descriptions given by these women are effectively stories of their personal experiences, and therefore cannot be generalised to other populations. As the women involved were sharing their own experiences, not every interview situation involved the same questions, and not all women went into the same level of detail as others when sharing their stories.

5.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

This research was intended to explore the experiences of women as they navigate and manage their multiple roles, namely that of student and mother of a preschool age child. While these were the two roles of primary focus in this research project, all of the women involved occupied other roles also, these included wife, income earner, volunteer, sister, daughter and friend. While the literature surrounding multiple role women is steadily increasing, little, if any, exists surrounding multiple role men, including that of men studying with pre-school age children. To date it is not known if men experience the same 'issues' of juggling multiple roles, if they find solace in other male students with young children, or if the pressures they experience are different to those of their female counterparts. Future research into this area would, like this current study, provide tertiary institutions with the knowledge needed to understand and aid their increasingly diverse student population base.

Issues that arose during the research process included that of the division of labour within the homes of these women. Currently there exists among these women a feeling of satisfaction and fairness regarding the distribution of these domestic duties within their homes. This most commonly was rationalised based on their husband's breadwinning roles. This research project was not longitudinal in nature, therefore it was not able to be seen how these feelings of fairness and satisfaction developed and changed as the women utilised their qualifications in paid employment. Research into such changes would prove of great interest.

As increasing evidence accumulates that suggests multiple roles are not inevitably detrimental to one's health and well-being, it becomes pertinent to examine the conditions under which a positive outcome is achieved. As it has been suggested that it is not the individual roles themselves that determine the outcome, but instead the combination of roles or the context under which the roles are performed, future research into how these conditions can be optimised would prove beneficial to all women attempting to manage multiple roles.

5.4 SUMMARY

The aim of this research project was to explore the experiences of women as they navigate multiple roles. Of specific interest in this project were the roles of tertiary student and mother of a preschool age child, roles which are noted as being time consuming and demanding, each requiring a high degree of responsibility from the women who chose to undertake them. Although it is recognised that women participate in their multiple roles under many different constraints and circumstances, it was possible to identify similarities in their stories, suggesting significant lessons can indeed be drawn from their experiences.

All of the women involved reported satisfaction in their multiple roles, and all agreed that the role of study was one they intended to fulfil despite the acknowledgement of personal and financial costs in doing so. By engaging in the role of study these women were ensuring a future for their families, providing role models to friends and families, and satisfying a need for personal self-fulfilment. While the women acknowledged room, and indeed a need, for improvement in their personal well-being, all agreed that multiple roles were beneficial in their totality. Of particular significance was the tendency of all the women to place the needs and wants of their families before their own. It is believed this has important implications to the experiencing of health and well-being by multiple role women. Given the increase in opportunities available to women and the, albeit, slowly reducing gender stereotypes within society, the number of women choosing to manage multiple roles is likely to increase further. For this reason research projects like the one presented here become important in understanding the motivations, desires and difficulties of these women, in the hope that what is found can be utilised to make their journeys all the more successful.

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APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A – Notice Advertising for Participants

Are You a Female Student with a Preschool Age Child? If so I'd really like to hear about your life.

My name is Joanne Rust - I am a Masters student in the School of Psychology at Albany. This year I am working towards completing my thesis project as the final requirement for my Master of Arts in Psychology.

My thesis focuses on the experiences of women who are combining the roles of motherhood and student. If you would be interested in giving approximately 1 hour of your time to share your experiences of combining these two roles, and possibly others, I'd love to hear from you.

If you would like to find out more please contact me. I will send you out an information sheet and consent form which will explain my study in greater detail, and also outline what will be asked of you. Please be assured that by receiving this information you are in no way obligated to be involved in my study.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding my study you are also welcome to contact my supervisor, Jocelyn Handy.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Jo Rust

Student/Researcher
Joanne Rust
Phone: 09 424 1343
Email: jo.rust@xtra.co.nz

Supervisor
Jocelyn Handy
Phone: 09 443 9799 ext. 2055
Email: j.a.handy@massey.ac.nz

APPENDIX B – Participant Information Sheet

Women in Multiple Roles: Study and Motherhood Combined

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction:

Researcher:

Joanne Rust

Phone: 09 424 1343

Email: jo.rust@xtra.co.nz

Supervisor:

Jocelyn Handy

Phone: 09 443 9799 ext. 2055

Email: j.a.handy@massey.ac.nz

This study is to fulfil the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University. Throughout this study I will be a full-time student at Massey University

Project Description

This project is a qualitative study which will involve individual in-depth interviews focusing on the experiences of women who are involved in occupying multiple roles, including those of student and mother of preschool age children. The study will enquire into the implications of occupying multiple roles on your own health and wellbeing, and that of your family as a whole.

Participant Recruitment:

The main criteria for participation is that you are involved in formal university study, either on a part-time or full-time basis, are female, and that you have a preschool aged child (i.e. 0-5 years).

Participant Involvement:

The study will involve one individual interview, lasting approximately 1 hour. The interviews will be held in a meeting room on the Massey University Albany Campus.

Project Procedures:

Each of the interviews will be audio taped and later I will personally transcribe these tapes. Once the transcripts have been typed you will be given a four week period to correct, elaborate on or delete any passage you feel is in need of clarification or withdrawal. Following this each of the transcripts will be analysed, here I will look for any themes, ideas, patterns or common threads identifiable in your experiences. Both the audiotapes of the interviews and the transcripts will be kept in a secure location within my own home, and accessed only by myself. At the conclusion of this study, you will have a choice over whether you would like to keep the audiotape of your interview and subsequent transcript, or if you would like them to be destroyed. In order to protect your identity throughout this study you will be asked to choose a false name which you will then be referred by during the writing process. Your identity will not be recognisable.

Participants Rights:

During the course of this study, you will have the right to:

- Decline to participate
- Decline to answer any particular question
- Ask for the audiotape to be turned off at any time during the interview
- Withdraw from the study up to six months after the interview
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.

At the conclusion of this study you will have the opportunity to obtain a summary sheet outlining my findings. If you are interested in receiving this, I will arrange to post this out to you.

Project Contacts:

During your participation in this project please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisor, on the contact numbers on page 1 of this information sheet, if you have any questions.

Ethics Approval Statement:

Ethics approval has been given by staff in the Psychology Department, Massey University, Palmerston North.

APPENDIX C – Participant Consent Form

Women in Multiple Roles: Study and Motherhood Combined

CONSENT FORM

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being taped.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name – printed: _____

APPENDIX D – Summary Letter to Participants

Joanne Rust
09 424 1343
philip.jo@slingshot.co.nz

26 November 2003

Dear Participant

Earlier this year you kindly took part in my research project regarding women studying at the tertiary level with pre-school aged children.

You mentioned at the time of your interview that you would be interested in receiving a summary of my findings, hence the purpose of this letter. I have included a outline of the main findings of my research, I hope you will enjoy reading them.

As part of the data collection and analysis process, an audiotape and a transcript of your interview were made (please be assured that at no time during the research process were your real names used, nor your ages). If you would like me to send you the only existing copies of these, please contact me on the email or phone number noted above. If I do not hear back from you regarding this before 20 December 2003, I will personally destroy these on your behalf.

I would like to thank you again for taking time out of your already busy schedules to participate in this research project. It is truly appreciated.

I hope you have had a successful year with your studies, and best of luck for next year.

Kindest regards

Jo Rust.

APPENDIX E – Summary Sheet for Participants

WOMEN IN MULTIPLE ROLES: STUDY AND MOTHERHOOD COMBINED

SUMMARY SHEET

The aim of this qualitative research project was to explore the experiences of women who were occupying various multiple roles, focusing primarily on that of student and mother of pre-school aged children. The study aimed to describe the context of their participation, drawing attention to their motivations, desires and difficulties, and to also explore the implications of such to their personal well-being, and their family life.

Participants were sought using both flyers located at the Massey University Crèche and word of mouth. Twelve women volunteered to participate in this research project. Suitability for participation was based on three criteria: 1) being involved in formal tertiary study, either on a full-time or part-time basis, 2) being female and 3) having a preschool aged child (i.e. aged 0-5 years). Each of the women were interviewed once using a one-on-one semi-structured interview format. Audiotapes were made of each interview; these audiotapes were then transcribed by myself. The transcripts were later analysed using thematic analysis. The analysis of the data collected led to the development of eight organising (or dominant themes) which reflect the experiences of these women. The eight organising themes were:

1. The turn around point – ‘The birth of my child’

For the women involved in this study it was found that the birth of their children had a profound impact on their decision to study at the tertiary level at this time in their lives. This was so for both the solo-mothers and the married mothers who commonly described the birth of their children as a ‘turn around point,’ giving them both the intrinsic motivation and the opportunity to fulfil their studying desires. For the solo-mothers it was found

wanting to avoid Government welfare dependency was a significant motivator in obtaining their qualifications. For the married women often the birth of their children meant a re-evaluation of their roles and their place within society, deciding whether to be a studying stay-at-home mum, or a working-mum, or a combination of all three. It was commonly described that by choosing to study enabled the best of both worlds with regards to time spent with children, and personal development and achievement.

2. Studying as a means of self-fulfilment

From my discussions with these women, it became evident that they gained more from their educational involvement than a qualification alone. While all of the women described both personal and career reasons for their decision to study, recognising the importance education held for their futures, for many study came to represent a hobby, something they enjoyed doing, were doing for their own reasons and from which they derived great personal satisfaction and achievement. As such self-fulfilment came to represent a common motivation for these women. It is through their studies that they feel they obtain an identity of their own, one free from simply being someone's mother, or someone's wife.

3. Childcare

All of the mothers involved in this study utilised some form of formal childcare. Overall, these women described immense satisfaction with both their childcare arrangements and their childcare providers. It was often believed that crèche and daycare facilities provided their children with age-appropriate stimulation, something they may not have been able to receive with such regularity at home, while also providing opportunities for social interaction and the development of social skills. For many of the mothers the staff of the crèche or daycare facility their children attended became a source of support in itself, not simply relating to issues of childrearing, although this indeed was part of it, but also with regard to helping with student life. Despite their overall satisfaction with their childcare arrangements, many of the women noted issues that they found to be sources of frustration,

something they believed tertiary institutions themselves could help alleviate, these were identified as: inflexibility of childcare, the cost of childcare, and waiting lists.

4. Social support and the division of labour

All of the women involved in this study described strong support networks, in the form of both family and friends. Such offers of support were commonly expressed as encouragement, pride, acceptance, childcare and emotional support. For many of the women the most common form of practical support offered, and readily accepted, was that of flexible on-call childcare. This was believed a particularly noteworthy finding, given that inflexible childcare was one of the main frustrations noted by these women. For many of the married women involved in this study the division of labour within their homes was not an issue they placed great importance on. While they commonly reported an unequal distribution of the household chores, including childcare, most reported their satisfaction with their current arrangements. Many justified their situations based on income, time, their own high standards and even feelings of guilt.

5. The challenges and benefits of multiple roles

One long standing debate regarding the occupation of multiple roles was whether this is beneficial or detrimental to women's well-being. While all acknowledged that they indeed experienced feelings of pressure and guilt in combining their roles, the women involved also explained that multiple role occupancy benefited their sense of well-being. Each of the women experienced high levels of satisfaction from their studying role, and described that this was not one they considered relinquishing in times of pressure. Time, or more appropriately the lack of time, was most commonly noted as the biggest source of pressure facing these women; as a result issues of time management and organisation became key issues.

6. The inevitability of spillover

Many of the women involved believed that even if you make a conscious effort to keep multiple roles separate, inevitably the effects of these spillover and impact the other areas of one's life. This was often expressed as affecting time spent with children or time spent studying, how new found knowledge impacts other areas of their lives, and the effect this has on their own behaviour, and that of their children. While it is widely acknowledged that stress can be transmitted from one sphere to another, there is increasing evidence that rewards too can accumulate across roles. It is for this reason that it is felt these women gain more from engaging in their multiple roles than they would from each role independently.

7. The multifaceted nature of well-being

When asked what well-being meant to them, each of the women involved recognised the multifaceted nature of this concept. Despite their belief that occupying multiple roles was indeed beneficial to their well-being, it was noted that there was room for, and indeed need for, improvement. Through the descriptions given by these women it was clear that despite their strong aspirations to study to achieve their personal goals, the needs and wants of their families most often took priority over their own desires. Although all of the women acknowledged both the emotional and mental health aspects, it was the area of physical well-being that most recognised as in need of such improvement. It was commonly expressed that an increase in the ability to take time out and exercise would be most beneficial in achieving the much needed enhancement to their experiencing of personal-wellbeing.

8. Feelings of camaraderie

A common feeling experienced by these women is that they did not fit into the typical university culture. However, while they did not feel they fitted with this assumed majority, it became evident that there existed strong ties with other women combining the roles of

motherhood and study. Through knowing of other women sharing similar experiences, many of the women described the feelings of support and encouragement they experienced simply by acknowledging they are not alone in their journeys. While this form of support was not actively pursued, it was most commonly found to exist among mothers meeting through crèche and daycare facilities, as it was found such facilities provided informal and spontaneous opportunities for social interactions to take place. During my discussions it became clear that these informal interactions came to represent an important form of encouragement on which these mothers could rely upon for reassurance, assistance and advice.

The identification of these eight organising themes enabled recognition of the significance these experiences held for the women involved. It was also possible to identify areas of significance to tertiary institutions. Such significance can be found in the many areas identified as needing attention and subsequent improvement to better enable the success of their students. These suggestions included an increasing awareness of the diversity of the student population, increasing awareness of the varying contexts of participation of their students, and the need to provide flexible and affordable childcare to all students who require this service. It is hoped that the knowledge generated from this research project has created an increased understanding of the motivations, desires and difficulties facing studying mothers which will ultimately help both current and future female students achieve their academic goals.