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Women in Multiple Roles: Study and Motherhood Combined

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Psychology

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

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2003

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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the twelve women who gave up valuable time in their already busy schedules as students and mothers to participate in this research project and share their personal experiences with me. Their kind offers of support and participation enabled the completion of this research project.

A great deal of thanks is also given to my family. To my husband, who continuously encouraged and supported me throughout this project, and motivated me to continue when the end seemed but a distant concept. To my dad whose belief in me started this whole journey, and to my mum, who continuously provided me with many much needed distractions. Also, to my unborn baby due next month, who else would have sat with me all this time and given me the perfect motivation to complete this project on time.

Finally to my supervisor, Jocelyn Handy, thank you for your continuous encouragement and positive feedback throughout the year.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
CONTENTS	iv
Chapter 1 – Introduction	6
1.1 Introduction	6
1.2 Aims	10
1.3 Definitions	10
1.3.1 Study	10
1.3.2 Motherhood	10
1.3.3 Division of Labour	10
1.3.4 Multiple Roles	11
1.3.5 Health & Well-being	11
1.4 Summary	11
Chapter 2 – Literature Review	13
2.1 Introduction – Women in Education	13
2.2 Women Students as Mothers	17
2.3 Division of Labour within the Home	19
2.4 Multiple Roles and Health & Well-being	24
2.5 Summary	29
Chapter 3 – Methodology	30
3.1 Methodology	30
3.2 Location of Self within the Research Project	30
3.3 Theoretical Underpinning – Feminist Thought & Theory	31
3.4 Research Design	34
3.5 Participants	35
3.6 Data Collection	35
3.7 Data Analysis	36
3.8 The Strength of the Research	38
3.8.1 Validity	38
3.8.2 Reliability	40
3.9 Ethical Considerations	41
3.9.1 Ethical Approval	41
3.9.2 Free and Informed Consent	41
3.9.3 The Right to Privacy	42
3.9.4 The Right to Anonymity	42
3.9.5 The Right to Confidentiality	42
3.10 Participant Profiles	43
3.11 Summary	45

Chapter 4 – Emerging Themes	47
4.1 Introduction	47
4.2 The Turn Around Point – ‘The Birth of My Child’	48
4.3 Studying as a means of Self-fulfilment	53
4.4 Childcare	57
4.5 Social Support and the Division of Labour	64
4.6 The Challenges and Benefits of Multiple Roles	73
4.7 The Inevitability of Spillover	80
4.8 The Multifaceted Nature of Well-being	85
4.9 Feelings of Camaraderie	91
4.10 Summary	94
Chapter 5 – Discussion	96
5.1 Contributions of Research Findings	96
5.1.1 Significance to Individuals	97
5.1.2 Significance to Educators	105
5.2 Limitations	106
5.3 Future Research	107
5.4 Summary	108
REFERENCES	109
APPENDICES	119