

## **E12.1 Raglan Wednesday 5 December 15.45-16.15**

### ***Motherhood and the Professional Doctorate: Balancing Time and Space (0493)***

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Being a mother can have an important impact on doctorate level study (Brown and Watson, 2010). The concepts of time and space are significant for women students with families as time is bound up with context and relationships (Bennett and Burke, 2017) and cannot be measured by clock time alone (Adam, 1984; 2004). Time is ‘implicated in every aspect of our lives’ (Adam, 1994:2) and has multiple meanings.

Higher education and family life can be viewed as greedy institutes of time (Edwards, 1993; Hughes, 2002), creating difficulties for women trying to carve out time and space for these competing priorities. This reflects the fact that trying to balance work, domestic life and family life can be problematic (Marandet and Wainwright, 2010; Webber, 2015a; Wellington and Sikes, 2006). Indeed, mothers studying on professional doctorate programmes can feel like they are leading dual lives (Brown and Watson, 2010).

Often a woman’s amount and quality of time to study (Bennett and Burke, 2017) is governed by balancing home and academic life, causing a great deal of stress (Brown and Watson, 2010). Having a lack of time can also lead to feelings of guilt about falling short of their ideals of motherhood (Brooks, 2015; Noddings, 2013). Finally, further strain and friction can be caused if time to study is regarded as a luxury rather than a necessity (Edwards, 1993).

It was important that woman’s experiences were ‘at the heart of the research’, (Henn, Weinstein and Foard, 2005:32) as this topic is personal to women, covering aspects of lives often hidden and private. Aspects of the mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2011) were adopted utilising multiple methods which encouraged the participants to take an active role in the research process. Participants were invited to complete a mind map and participant-led interview focusing on identity (before and during the Professional Doctorate experience), transformation, and relationships in the family.

The participants were self-selecting, invited to participate through an email invitation through the Professional Doctorate Network UK. 11 participants were selected based on their gender, age (over 25), having a long-term partner over 2 years (either currently or during their studies) and either having children under 18 years of age or someone dependent on them for care. Although this is a small sample size we feel that it is sufficient to capture rich relatable rather than generalisable data (Waller, 2006). Ethical approval was sought and granted from the University of Plymouth. This was shared with and agreed by all participants and names were changed to protect anonymity.

Thematic analysis was used to find patterns across the data of the women’s lived in experiences, views and behaviour (Clarke and Braun, 2017). After thematic analysis the lens of family capital was utilised as a framework to make theoretical sense of the data. The term family capital (introduced by Gofen, 2009) has been developed by Webber (2017a,b) using Bourdieu’s definitions of capital as a starting point to outline the types of support offered within families to aid educational success. Limited access to cultural, social, economic or symbolic capital can lead to inequalities in education (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991).

The analyses revealed that time and space are important aspects of the women's narratives. Balancing time was of utmost importance to the women and they developed many different strategies, of varying success, to do this. Unlike Brooks' study (2013) there were many examples of negotiation of domestic and childcare responsibilities as some students relied on others to help them to 'create' time:

*... but he [partner] also at the weekends makes the time available so I can actually use the time to study... . (Marnie)*

Some women felt that they had to carve out set amounts of diarised time in order to study:

*I've literally scrawled out days to get assignments done ... so that's how I work it. (Vicky)*

Others would try to study when their children were not around to minimise disruption to family life (see also Brooks, 2013; Edwards 1993; Webber 2017a):

*I thought I would be able to contain my EdD in within the school day, and largely I can... but it does escape around the edges and there are times when there can be conflicts. (Lou)*

The creation of space to study (both physical and mental) was also a necessity for a number of women in this research. Although creating a physical space within the home could be a source of conflict, for some it was necessary for enabling study time.

*I've got an office I've claimed... so I've claimed it as my own space now and it's great ... and I have much more freedom with my time now.(Emma)*

Some women experienced immense feelings of guilt about their doctorate (Bennett and Burke, 2017), regarding study time as a luxury (Edwards, 1993). Furthermore, when it occupied their thoughts or 'head space' this could cause further conflict and strain.

*It's the head-space, and even if I wasn't studying, I knew I should have been studying, or thinking about studying, or kicking myself I hadn't been studying. (Marnie)*

Moreover, receiving limited support from family members led to additional stress for women students as they had to carefully negotiate time and space to study around the needs of the family (see also Webber, 2017a,c).

Although women all have unique stories of how access to time and space affects their ability to study, there appear to be common strategies employed to manage them. For example, many women spoke of the importance of negotiating time and space to study even though this sometimes caused conflict and feelings of guilt (Brooks, 2015). Accessing high levels of capital from within the family can also support women in their studies and make a difference to their success (Webber, 2017, a, b). This paper highlights time as a valuable source of capital and sheds light on how it connects and supports other forms of capital. This has important implications for supporting mature women students in higher education.

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