

WOMEN IN RESEARCH

*Strategies for Women
Engaging in
Postgraduate Study*

Papers and
Presentations
from the
1996 Postgraduate
Forum for Women

edited by

Helen Bulis
Jenny Lock
Janette Mulherin
Janet Norton
Cheryl Robert



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Central Queensland
UNIVERSITY

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Central Queensland University

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Editors' Introduction

In September 1996, Central Queensland University hosted its first Postgraduate Forum for Women. The objectives of the Forum were to:

- provide networking opportunities for postgraduate women;
- provide strategies to assist women to plan, undertake and complete postgraduate study; and
- provide opportunities for discussion of women's experiences in undertaking postgraduate study.

The title of the Proceedings reflects the interest that was generated throughout the Forum in participants gaining access to the personal philosophies and strategies that other women adopted during their postgraduate experiences.

As well as providing papers from the day, it is hoped that the following information may encourage women to plan, undertake, and complete postgraduate study. Anyone who has ever undertaken postgraduate study will no doubt agree that whilst postgraduate study can be interesting and challenging, there can also be times when it can be overwhelming, frightening, and very frustrating. The personal insights provided by each of the speakers, may assist women to negotiate doubts and problems, and recognise the importance of savouring achievements. The papers outline some of the choices to be made, the issues to be faced along the way, and the benefits which can be gained.

Kate White in her keynote address outlined the outcomes of an investigation into women's participation rates in research higher degrees at Monash University. Her paper outlines some of the structural and attitudinal barriers that adversely impact on women's participation rates in research higher degrees, together with some of the recommended strategies to address these obstacles.

In the paper *Demystifying Postgraduate Research*, Leonie Rowan provides some refreshingly honest insights into her experiences of postgraduate study. Her candid and amusing anecdotes should strike a chord with women who find their motivation flagging in the midst of their studies. Leonie dispels some of the myths and misconceptions surrounding higher degree study, and offers some powerful sources of encouragement, to those who may be experiencing doubts concerning their abilities to complete a postgraduate course.

Dani Stehlik discusses her personal experiences and philosophies of postgraduate study, and the benefits of developing a carefully considered timetable in order to more effectively plan a course of study. Dani provides a range of very valuable strategies in order to assist postgraduate students to reach their various goals, and outlines some very important issues about the benefits of time management.

Helen Bulis explores the advantages and disadvantages of tutoring whilst undertaking postgraduate study. Helen writes in her introduction:

I have written (this paper) from experience and the heart and not as an academic piece punctuated with references.

Helen poses a series of questions for women to consider, and considers some of the consequences of combining tutoring with postgraduate study.

Trish Andrews continues some of the themes raised in Helen's paper, as she outlines some of the strategies that can be helpful in managing full time paid work with study. Trish provides some ideas to consider when first deciding what postgraduate option to pursue, and follows this up with strategies to assist women in negotiating some of the tensions that arise, as a result of juggling a full time paid position and a postgraduate degree.

Browyn Fredericks provides insights into an indigenous experience of postgraduate study. She discusses some of the pertinent issues that are occurring within the higher education sector in regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander postgraduate student research. Browyn offers a challenging series of questions, and offers some reflective and informative theories on her topic.

The final paper (presented in note form) quite fittingly addresses one of the most contested issues for postgraduate students, that of the student/supervisor relationship. Jenny Lock provides a brief overview of some of the characteristics and expectations of candidates and supervisors, and lists some of the strategies that should be adopted at an institutional level, to assist postgraduate students and supervisors to negotiate their relationship.

The 1996 Postgraduate Forum for Women provided an opportunity for women to articulate their experiences of postgraduate study, and to recognise the value of sharing and listening to the diversity of other's women's perspectives. For those currently enrolled, or intending to enrol in postgraduate study, we trust that this document will encourage, inspire, and support you in the times when you may need it most.

Helen Bulis

Jenny Lock

Janette Mulherin

Janet Norton

Cheryl Robert

Table of Contents

	Page Number
<i>Monash Equity Project</i> Kate White	1
<i>Demystifying Postgraduate Research</i> Leonie Rowan	11
<i>Time Management and Planning: Taking Control of it.</i> Dani Stehlik	19
<i>Exploring the Advantages and Disadvantages of tutoring whilst Undertaking Postgraduate Study</i> Helen Bulis	25
<i>Strategies for Managing Work and Postgraduate Study</i> Trish Andrews	28
<i>An Indigenous Experience of Postgraduate Study</i> Bronwyn Fredericks	30
<i>Characteristics and Expectations of the Student/ Supervisor Relationship</i> Jenny Lock	36

MONASH EQUITY PROJECT

Kate White

Monash University

The title of this event "Postgraduate Forum for Women" is important. Because a woman's postgraduate experience often determines the direction of her future career. So that it has linkages forward into academia or out in to the community. But it also has linkages back into women's experience in undergraduate life. The quality or otherwise of a woman's postgraduate experience often influences how well she and her female colleagues fare in academic life and act as a model, or lack of it, for women who come after.

The Monash Equity Project which I carried out for the Monash Postgraduate Association from September 1995 to June 1996, found that a range of structural and attitudinal barriers adversely impacted on women's participation rates in research higher degrees. There was a significant decline in women's participation rates by degree faculty between undergraduate degrees and research higher degrees. The study also found that women were less likely to take up post-doctoral fellowships once they completed their PhDs which meant they were less likely than men to continue research beyond doctoral level. I have now embarked on an Affirmative Action initiative to devise strategies to assist women academics enhance their research productivity.

Monash Equity Project

Background

In April 1995 Monash Postgraduate Association (MPA) prepared a submission for a project to be funded by a Higher Education Equity Program grant. Specific methodology proposed in the submission included:

- a series of workshops and seminars aimed at the target group - women already enrolled in research higher degrees and those who may be considering continuing on to such degrees
- collecting data on attitudes, resources, policies and practices the target group consider would enhance their opportunity to enrol in and complete a research higher degree
- involving women from all faculties

- converting this data into policy statements to feed into appropriate decision-making bodies
- devising appropriate professional development programs for both research and academic staff to facilitate beneficial attitudinal and behavioural changes throughout the university
- regularly reporting through university publications and feedback workshops
- evaluating the project through feedback from workshops and a final workshop for participants

During the first two months of the project I carried out an extensive survey of Australian and international literature on the topic and consulted widely with women at Monash University.

Of all the literature consulted perhaps Baringa (quoted in Paula Caplan, *Lifting a Ton of Feathers: a woman's guide to surviving in the academic world, 1993*, p.173) best expresses the pattern of women's participation rates. She noted a funnelling effect or process, or what she called the leaking pipeline, that tends to occur between women's participation rates at undergraduate level and at postgraduate level in research higher degrees. The work of Sandra Acker over 20 years on gender and education (*Gendered Education, 1994*, p.153 and ff.) suggests that this funnelling is a constant theme in education from nursery and primary school teachers through to academics.

So the funnelling of women's participation in research higher degrees mirrors a wider funnelling of women in senior positions throughout the education system and also in the public sector generally as well as the corporate sector.

The Process

Establishing Networks

One of the aims of the project, as outlined in the MPA submission, was to establish networks throughout the university. The networking began with the project launch. I also compiled a contact list, and wrote articles on the project for internal publications. Further contacts came from MPA and the Equal Opportunity Unit staff. I also participated in two forums at Melbourne University and a national postgraduate seminar in Adelaide to try to gain publicity for the project.

The Workshop Program

Women often experience increasing difficulties at university as they attempt to move from undergraduate degrees into honours and then on to research higher degrees. Some of the

structural barriers are easy to identify but attitudinal barriers are often more subtle and can cause women to turn their uneasiness and lack of confidence back on themselves.

The Literature Search

The literature search suggested themes that were often reinforced through these workshops. Themes to emerge from the literature are summarised below:

a) *pathways to postgraduate study.* Women have a myriad of pathways to postgraduate study. Many do not do an undergraduate degree, followed by a Masters and/or a PhD. Women often return to study once they have young children or their children have gone off to school. Others may wait until an elderly parent or relative dies before they are free to focus on their own interests or needs.

But where women do move straight from undergraduate to postgraduate research they perform well. Helen Arthurson's study of women's PhD completion rates at the University of New England over an eleven year period showed that women in the Sciences were more likely to successfully complete their theses and in a shorter time than women in other faculties. The modal age of female students at initial enrolment in a PhD was 23, whereas for Arts it was 37. This suggests a pattern of women Science graduates quickly moving from undergraduate into postgraduate study. Women PhD candidates in Science were also more successful in graduating with their PhD than the total PhD student group, both male and female.

b) *women on the periphery of academic cultures and structures:* Some of the literature suggests that women remain on the periphery of academic cultures and structures. Women are not invited to join the informal networks-even as academics let alone postgraduates - unless they have male partners who are academics.

Some research suggested, especially in the sciences, that women tend to be given research projects that are not mainstream to the discipline, or in sections of the department that are under-resourced. (See Becher, Henkel and Kogan, *Graduate Education in Britain*, 1994, p. 156 and ff)

c) *isolation/few support networks:* Not surprisingly, studies constantly report that women as postgraduates - and academics - lack confidence and see themselves as isolated. These same women said they had no support networks, nor generally had they attempted to establish any.

d) *more problems with supervision:* Several studies report that women tend to have more problems with supervision. Often supervisors are male, but difficulties with female supervisors are also common.

The fact that the majority of women postgraduates are supervised by men and have little contact with their female peers may discourage PhD completions by women as Phillips and Pugh (*How to Get a PhD*) note. But other factors are possibly at work here. Booth

and Satchell suggest that the professional status of a women PhD candidate's mother will influence completion rates (the higher the mother's social class as defined by her occupation, the more likely the daughter will complete her PhD successfully).e) *fewer resources*: A survey at Griffith University, *The Unintended Gender Effects of Higher Education on Postgraduate Students* (1994), found that women postgraduates fared second best when it came to the slice up of the ever diminishing resources cake. The questionnaire listed 19 different resources, ranging from desks to computer training and conference funding, and men reported they were better equipped than women in every instance. However, it should be noted that women often have fewer resources because they are often in Faculties which have restricted funds.

f) *lack of a critical mass and role models*: Ingrid Moses in *Barriers to Women's Participation as Postgraduate Student* (1990), argued that a critical mass of higher degree students in related areas seems to be necessary to provide peer support, stimulation, "normality" of women's concerns with study, good facilities and formalised seminar programs.

g) *different communication styles*: Castleman et. al *Limited Access: Women's Disadvantage In Higher Education* (1995) noted that those interviewed in higher education said that men tended to promote themselves better and to impress, independently of their actual performance. This confirmed earlier work, especially that of Hall, that women's way of expressing themselves and communicating within a university setting disadvantaged them.

h) *competing demands*: Unless women proceed straight from undergraduate to postgraduate studies, anecdotal evidence suggests that it is likely that they will have more, and more diverse, demands on their time and energy than men.

i) *the question of relevance*: A number of questions of relevance come to mind: How relevant are research higher degrees to women's career aspirations and their need to juggle this myriad of competing demands? Are women looking at research higher degrees and rejecting them as too hard, too long and not relevant to their needs? Are women choosing instead to do graduate diplomas and masters by coursework because they are shorter, more career focussed, and better enable them to advance quickly in their careers? Moses (1990) certainly noted this trend.

Statistical analysis

Women's participation rates in research higher degrees are significantly lower, even in those faculties in which women traditionally have had high participation rates at an undergraduate level. For example, in Arts in 1995 their participation rate at undergraduate level was 71.9 per cent and at higher degree research level was 56.4. Thus the ratio of female higher degree research students to female undergraduates in Arts was .8. In Education the lower participation rates at postgraduate level were even more pronounced - from 86 per cent at undergraduate level to 58.6 per cent for higher degree research students, a ratio of almost .7. Women's higher degree research participation rates were

also significantly lower in Business & Economics - 47.5 per cent for undergraduates and 35.9 for higher degree research students, a ratio of .75 and Science where the ratio is .74.

The significantly lower participation rates of women in research higher degrees raises some important concerns. If a university has lower participation rates for women across almost all degree faculties it means that there is a restricted pool of women who will complete PhDs. Lack of relevant doctoral and postdoctoral qualifications and experience is one factor in women's low participation rates in academia.

Meanwhile, women's participation rates in other than research higher degrees indicate that women who go on to postgraduate study often prefer to do masters by coursework or graduate diplomas. The ratio of women in other than research higher degrees to women in undergraduate degrees in 1995 was as follows: Arts .9, Business and Economics .8, Pharmacy 1.5, and Science 1.2. Except for Engineering and Law, the ratios were higher for coursework postgraduate degrees than for research higher degrees.

These ratios raise the question of how relevant are research higher degrees to women's career aspirations. Clearly women often prefer to do coursework masters and graduate diplomas.

This in turn raises concerns about equity. It is difficult for students enrolled in masters by coursework to gain scholarships. Doing coursework may also cut off their entry to a research higher degree and decrease their chances for scholarship eligibility. While many women may prefer to do a Masters by coursework, they are financially disadvantaged by doing so especially if it is an upfront fee-paying course. On the other hand, a 1994 study suggests that doing a PhD. has a low fiscal pay-off: it is a poor social investment given its high cost and long study period. (*Campus Review Weekly*, 18-24 August 1994).

Interviewing postgraduate coordinators

I conducted open ended interviews with a randomised group of 20 postgraduate coordinators across all departments to explore what they saw as the barriers to women's participation in research higher degrees and how these might be overcome.

Outcomes

Views of Postgraduate Coordinators

The response of postgraduate coordinators varied considerably and often depended on the faculty. However, there was sometimes wide variation in response between departments in the same faculty.

Postgraduate coordinators are presumably chosen for that role because they have a special interest in postgraduate research students. While many were enthusiastic and supportive of their postgraduates, I was concerned at the extent to which postgraduate coordinators did not question existing discrimination against women in higher education. How can a

postgraduate coordinator state that there are two women staff in a large Department, but this has no effect on the poor participation rates of women in that Department?

Others were aware of the “Old boy’s club” in their Department but were unwilling to challenge the status quo, even though this was keeping women postgraduates and academics away from the Department.

One of the most worrying responses of postgraduate coordinators was to the issue of intermitting. I simply do not accept that a women needs to remain childless to keep at the cutting edge of research. It is a question of how that research is organised and how research teams conduct themselves.

Other issues of concern included the response to women doing honours part-time. Postgraduate coordinators made it clear that they did not advertise the fact that honours could be offered part-time. How many women do not proceed to honours because they have never been informed that this is an option? And how many women with young children might do honours part-time if they knew it was available? Clearly this policy is discriminatory and unfair to some women.

A related issue is part-time scholarships. The university is clear that part-time scholarships are available for women with other responsibilities and information about this is widely disseminated. But most postgraduate coordinators did not know of these scholarships. One or two claimed that the eligibility criteria for women were stricter than the University suggested. Again, there appears to be a breakdown in the flow of communication within the University which disadvantages women. If postgraduate coordinators do not know about part-time scholarships, their students are unlikely to apply for them.

While these interviews with postgraduate coordinators revealed a healthy diversity in approaches to a wide range of issues, it is of some concern that there is no agreement, for example, on the need for a research culture in each department. Diversity is to encouraged, but if it leads to inequality, and especially to inequity for women in higher degree research, it is to be questioned.

Views of Women at Monash

The barriers

The feedback from workshops often reinforced those issues identified in the literature search. But it also suggested additional barriers as well as differences between faculties.

a) *finance:* One of the major barriers to women participating in research higher degrees is money. Without a scholarship to provide an independent income, most women cannot contemplate a research higher degree. Women often described periods of being without any source of income and wondering whether it was worth continuing. Two said that they had been blatantly discriminated against when they applied unsuccessfully for scholarships at university, with the comment “you have got a husband”. (It should be noted

that Monash University selection policies stipulate that awards are to be made strictly to according to academic merit).

In Engineering and possibly in other faculties, there was little financial incentive to do postgraduate research degrees. Several women engineers said they had had enough of study, being poor and being at university by the end of their fourth year. Moreover, some had already been offered jobs after doing vacation work at the end of their third year. Engineering graduates expected to start on a salary of about \$31,000. They said the attitude in industry tended to be “you can do a PhD. but we won’t pay you any more”.

A further difficulty for those women who are enrolled part-time and do receive a scholarship is that the scholarship is taxed, whereas those enrolled full-time with scholarships are not. At Monash some of those with part-time scholarships receive a higher stipend to compensate for being taxed. However, given that many women would prefer to study part-time, taxing scholarships for part-timers is an equity issue.

It should be noted that most younger students have already accumulated a considerable Higher Education contributory Scheme (HECS) debt. The prospect of borrowing money to do postgraduate research or of living on a \$16,000 stipend for three years to do a PhD. while still have the HECS debt to eventually repay was not an attractive proposition for many.

b) childcare: Is a matter of allocating resources and is another financial barrier to some women doing postgraduate study. Women said that it was impossible to focus on postgraduate research unless they had access to flexible, affordable and reliable child care

c) lack of role models and mentors: Women postgraduates tended to describe their experiences in terms of whether or not they had men and women in academia who had encouraged them. Several said they would not have considered doing honours, let alone postgraduate research, unless a lecturer or tutor had encouraged them. One Dean found that postgraduate female participation rates in his Faculty increased significantly after he wrote to the top final year students inviting them to do research higher degrees. He commented that women seemed to lack confidence until they realised they had achieved good undergraduate results. Conversely, several women in third year of their undergraduate degrees who were interested in honours were mystified about the process of how students got selected. They asked at workshops about where they could gain information on the process of being accepted into the honours year. Other participants, who were both postgraduates and academics, argued that male academics often withheld information from women - such as information about how to get scholarships for research higher degrees or how to get on to various Departmental committees.

Clearly, the honours year is the key to understanding women’s participation rates in research higher degrees. There is often a fall-off rate between third and honours year for women and an even more significant fall-off between honours and postgraduate research. Universities need to focus their attention on this transitional year from undergraduate to postgraduate study if they are to improve women’s participation in research higher degrees.

d) *supervision:* Many women described frustration with supervision. While some women had had excellent supervisors, others believed they were unsupported. Even where women had female supervisors the problem was often that the female supervisor was untenured and was not available for the whole of the student's candidature.

e) *the inflexibility of the institution or departments within it:* Several women complained about the bias against women doing part-time undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Women doing part-time research degrees find it almost impossible to get any funding. Those with small children or other family responsibilities cannot study full-time. Often they perceive that the university wished they would to away and stop bothering them. Some Departments discourage or even refuse to accept women, and presumably men also, part-time into the honours year, as postgraduate coordinators admitted.

f) *response of Monash to women returning to study:* Women complained that Departments were not interested in all the juggling of time that women often have to do in order to study either full or part-time. This juggling may be even more complex if, as postgraduates, they need to do field work or travel interstate to do research or attend conferences.

g) *unsupportive environment:* Women discussed a range of subtle ways in which they experienced discrimination. Women academics described the behaviour of male academics towards them at meetings: men would often start to fidget and shuffle papers when a woman academic tried to contribute to discussion and then resume discussion as if she had not spoken. Postgraduates also experience similar dismissive behaviour from their supervisors or other academics in their Department.

At home, women said their husbands or partners often engaged in subtle sabotage-either making them feel guilty for studying or being unwilling to share more of the household chores.

h) *community attitudes:* There are different community attitudes to males and females doing postgraduate study. A man who is doing a research Masters or PhD. is generally regarded as "doing it for his family" and praised. But a woman postgraduate who has a family is regarded as selfish.

i) *response of Monash to life experience of postgraduates:* Many women come to postgraduate study experience after completing an undergraduate degree as a mature age student or after a break of many years between their undergraduate and postgraduate study. They often believe they have more life experience and also broad learning to share with their supervisors and other postgraduates, but complain they are treated as being "wet behind the ears". This tends to produce a sense of isolation and displacement for them as postgraduates.

j) *the cumulative effect:* It is often not one particular attitudinal or structural barrier that becomes the straw that breaks the camel's back, but the cumulative effect of both

structural and attitudinal barriers that lead women to weigh up whether or not they should attempt postgraduate research or, if enrolled, to continue with their candidature.

Strategies to overcome the barriers

Universities need to understand the diverse pathways that lead women to research higher degrees. Women suggested some ways of overcoming these barriers might include:

a) *the university improving its links to the community:* Women who have left the workforce to have and care for young children often felt alienated from the university community. Universities need to provide ways for women to reconnect to universities, possibly through community adult education.

b) *part-time study:* Recognition by the university that part-time study is the best option for some women at both undergraduate and postgraduate level and Departments advertising that, under special circumstances, it is possible to do the honours year part-time.

c) *more encouragement, mentors and networks:* Women at an undergraduate level need more information about honours year and postgraduate study and more encouragement to consider postgraduate study. This encouragement might include: Heads of Department writing to third and final year women who have received good grades asking them to consider postgraduate research degrees; setting up pilot step-by-step mentoring programs in those departments where women are underrepresented at the undergraduate level; and encouraging women to become involved in the research culture of the department, especially at honours level.

d) *more resources for women doing research higher degrees:* More women would do higher research degrees if they could do them part-time and receive some scholarship or full time, if the university provided affordable/subsidised child care.

The report on this project, with a series of recommendations designed to overcome many of the barriers discussed above, is now awaiting endorsement from Monash University's Equity Plan Consultative Committee.

Women academics and research

And finally, a brief outline of an affirmative action initiative on which I am engaged for the Equal Opportunity Unit at Monash.

This discrepancy between males and females in higher education research extends into academia. An Equal Opportunity Report at Melbourne University, *Establishing a Research Career* (1996) analysed a matched sample of 40 males and 40 females appointed at lecturer B level over the last four years across 41 Departments, about a third of all Departments.

This study found significant gender differences, and that women experienced more difficulty than men in establishing a research career. In general, both the men and women sampled said that the pressure of time on new academics is such that teaching and administrative demands over which they have little control severely restrict research. However, more women than men sampled were likely to be impeded in their research.

The study also found that while men and women had the same academic qualifications at the time of their appointment, men had published significantly more articles. More women experienced difficulties in receiving an adequate special Initiative Grant, preparing research grant applications, securing services where these needed to be bought in, and in the amount of time they spent on lectures and administration compared with research. Women more frequently reported difficulty in finding time to get their research launched.

The Melbourne University study endorses the findings of Joanne Winter, Monash University, who analysed DEET statistics on large grants for the NTEU. She found that women make fewer applications and those that do receive less funding.

The Monash initiative will aim to increase women's productivity through a series of workshops/focus groups which will provide an opportunity for individual participants to explore how they might enhance their work, and especially their research, productivity. At another level what will hopefully emerge from these workshops and more informal discussions are recommendations for changes to University policies and practices which could facilitate increased productivity for women academics.

So I end where I began by suggesting that the issue of women in postgraduate research is part of a continuum of women's passage through higher education. If we work to improve the experience of women in research higher degrees it may have a significant impact on women's research performance as academics and encourage more undergraduate women to do postgraduate research.

Demystifying Postgraduate Research

Leonie Rowan

Central Queensland University
Faculty of Education

Introduction

When I turned 21 I reflected as one is wont to do upon my successes (few) and failures (considerable) and was struck by the scarcity of areas within which I felt I possessed any expertise. Oh sure, I was about to finish a degree: a double major in literature no less and a pretty decent sprinkling of historical studies. But what did I really know? What kind of job would I get? When would I really be smart? In this sombre and serious mood, aided in no small part by a generous quantity of Great Western champagne, I decided to embark upon self improvement campaign. Yes, I was going to become a better person: a person that anyone would be proud to know.

And so began the great and spectacular hobby phase of my life. I toyed with craft; I studied art; I brushed up on useless trivia. Then after a particularly unfortunate piece of experimentation in the home perm department, I decided it was time for a more relaxing hobby: thus I decided to keep a diary. Not only would this allow me space for valuable self reflection, it would also be a record of my brilliance, my wit, my erudition: and some place for me to finally write down some of the spectacularly useless trivia I learned during hobby number three.

And I have here today one of those diaries; I'll skip over all this fascinating information about the weather, the ramifications of the day I decided to try and cook Peking Duck, the rise and fall in the price of Great Western Champagne, (August 12, 1992) and read to you instead an entry I made on New Years Eve, 1993: the eve of 1993.

“Right well that’s it then. Done. Out the door. On my way. No looking’ back. I can’t do it. I won’t do it. It wouldn’t help me even if I did do it. And if one more person says I should do it, I’ll kill them. It’s silly. It’s pointless. I’m tired. I’ve been wasting my time. I’m quitting this bloody PhD: and I’m going to get a job”.

What was I thinking about here you might ask? What is the link between this diary and my compulsion for self-improvement? What, I’m sure your dying to know, is my reason for sharing this with you today?

Well, the link is simple. At the time when I was on this downward spiral into the pit of despair, I was a postgraduate student.

And yet, this hideous but strangely hypnotic photo serves as proof that despondency need not be the end of the story. Yay verily did I walk through the valley of despair and emerge triumphant (if a little haggard) on the other side.

My story, my journey from pointlessness to PhD is not, I believe uncommon. It's just not talked about. Right up there with sex, religion and politics as issues that you don't discuss in polite company is the reality of postgraduate study. There's an aura of mystery around the whole deal: people who've done it like it to sound more mysterious than it is; people who are doing it don't want to let on that they don't know what all the fuss is about so they don't talk. And every time someone adheres to this code of silence the mystery and intrigue deepens and intensifies leaving those outside or on the edges of the thing in awe of its difficulty and strangeness.

My task today is to talk to you about the reality of postgraduate study: to demystify the process and the options.

Great myths of postgraduate study (BFFS)

The first point to make here is that women's systematic exclusion from the educational sphere has also effected our participation in higher education.

For hundreds of years women were denied the right to undertake formal education on the understanding that:

- a: we weren't intellectually capable
- b: we weren't ever going to be able to compete with men
- c: we were risking our very femininity.

Oh yes indeed, the dominant argument at the turn of the century was that when a woman thought, god forbid she should have an opinion, the blood would rush from that part of her body which is her central reason for existence, the blood would rush from her womb, to her brain: this would cause the womb to dry up; leaving us with a whole society filled with educated but barren women who foolishly sought to resist their anatomical destiny and instead brought the end of the world upon us.

"The woman who pursues an education is that most pitiful of creatures; an unhappy wretch yearning for things that can never be.

To desire an education is to reject her status as mother. No real woman could surely ask for that?"

1922: Wilfred Addison

Given how hard women had to fight to get into education in the first place, it is no great surprise to know that their journey into higher education has also been slow and inconsistent.

In Australia in 1994 37% of PhD students were women; 40% of research masters; 49% of course work masters of all postgrad students were women: these were concentrated in the 'traditional' areas of the humanities and social sciences.

As you look around this room today you are more likely to see an Elvis impersonator, than a women studying for a chemistry PhD. And to search for women in engineering, you might as well go looking for Elvis himself.

So this brings me to some of the key reasons that postgraduate study is shrouded in mystery and my list of the five great myths about the area.

Great Myths and Mythconceptions

- postgraduate students must be brilliant, here I'm talking splitting the atom kind of genius (although what kind of a damn fool idea that was has increasingly become obvious)
- postgraduate students must be academics (if you're not aspiring to be a professor then there's no space for you)
- postgraduate study is for morons or people who can't handle the 'real' world (and therefore anything you achieve isn't really significant because you can't cut it on the outside)
- postgraduate study is a privilege (the Amanda Vanstone syndrome) and therefore you shouldn't be doing it

Underlying all these mythconceptions is the fundamental belief that women can't/shouldn't do it.

Why are these myths in circulation? Well, there's a certain value placed on tertiary study, at least in some circles, and an even higher value placed on postgraduate study. It's a currency, if you like, which signifies the high rollers: it continues to separate the educational haves from the have nots. And when you've got it, you're part of the inner circle; a circle that doesn't want just anyone inside.

Alternatively, people can feel very threatened by people in postgraduate study. There's a tendency to assume that graduate students are arrogant, self centred, obnoxious know it alls who don't think of anything but themselves. Personally I think that's pretty silly. But it's this misunderstanding about postgraduate study and all the myths that surround it which relate directly to the key issues faced by postgraduate students and the reasons people do/don't undertake it in the first place.

Who does it?

Traditionally: white middle class men. Increasingly, people from diverse racial, social, cultural, financial backgrounds.

Why do we do it?

Looking around the room here I can see 60 or 70 people. I'd therefore confidently predict that we'd be able to come up with 60 or 70 reasons for undertaking any form of postgraduate study: and here I'm talking about honours degrees; masters qualifiers; masters; PhD; professional doctorates and so on.

Here's an earth shattering statement: people are different; motivated by different things; committed to different things; looking for different results. Naturally enough, therefore, we study for different reasons.

Write down on that piece of paper all of the reasons why you started or thought about starting postgraduate study.

Some of the key reasons I've experienced relate to these three issues:

- professional reasons: employment; promotion; transferability; expectations of the employer to be better in your career (acquire knowledge to do a job better rather than a qualification to get the job in the first place)
- personal reasons: commitment to topic; interest in issues; love of learning; desire to make a difference
- social reasons; interactions with other people

All of these reasons are perfectly valid. Yet some reasons tend to get privileged over others: the committed intellectual ranking higher than the pragmatist who sees a direct correlation between masters and promotion.

In addition to this, the same set of beliefs which argued that women weren't meant for education have sought to naturalise a distinction between professional and the personal: the public and the private, if you like. That's led to a situation where study directly connected to professional activity is accorded greater value than study linked to personal reasons.

The trick is to recognise what your reason is, and to define it AS YOUR OWN.

You may very well be studying to improve your career prospects. But doesn't that mean you're not committed to study? In fact it means that you've got a powerful reason for studying.

Think about the answer that you wrote down: does it focus on you or someone else. Rewrite it to put yourself at the centre.

Centring oneself in the process of study is something traditionally quite hard for students to do: you're handing yourself over to a process which could last up to 7 years (in the case of a part time PhD). That's a long time to be waiting for a result. That's one of the key issues faced by postgrads: we'll spend a bit of time looking at those now.

What issues are faced?

- **Academic Anxiety and self doubt**

The extract from my diary that I read at the start, highlights issue number one faced by postgrad: academic anxiety and self doubt.

If I had a dollar for every time I'd thought that I was too stupid to get a PhD I'd be delivering this address via satellite from Monte Carlo.

Because of the air of mystery that has always surrounded higher education there's a tendency to assume that it's like the great sword Excalibur: only the chosen one, the mighty Arthur, can lift it's weight above his head and thereby earn the right to rule.

Anxiety is natural. But it also has to be controlled. Allow yourself time to think about the good things you've written. Recognise that you've got a long way to go.

- **Confusion about topics**

If ever there was an environment designed to generate confusion it would have to be postgraduate study. This is for two reasons: people tend to treat postgraduates as though they're all the same; they're not. What you do in Arts, is quite different to what you do in Biology and different again to what you do in Health Science. Even within a seemingly discrete discipline there is endless variety in terms of approaches to a topic.

I studied Australian women's literature: I could have employed any one of a dozen strategies for reading and making sense of these texts: the feminist framework that I adopted may well have been totally meaningless to a person from a different background.

To overcome this confusion, therefore, it's important at the outset to recognise that it may well take some time for you to define your topic and your approach. Allow yourself that breathing space. Don't compare yourself to others. Talk to people. Talk to yourself. Then think about what matters to you.

- **Confusion about process**

How long is this going to take? What forms do I have to fill in? What does my supervisor expect from me? What do I expect from my supervisor?

These are the kinds of technical questions which can cause postgraduate students weeks of sleepless nights. I have two pieces of advice here: get hold of anything that's been written down in relation to the rules of your study. Read it. Then talk to someone else who has read it. Test your interpretation out against theirs. Then ask the person who is supposed to know: your supervisor; your friend who ever.

I've emphasised in this discussion the need to talk to others: that's because one of the other key issues faced by postgrads is a sense of isolation.

- **Isolation**

In any professional area the sense of being alone can have, from time to time, a negative impact. Even the most independent and self directed of learners can occasionally look around and think: there's no one else doing this! And it's not much of a walk from that point to the feeling that, if no one else is doing it, I shouldn't be doing it either. Or how will I know if I'm doing it right?

In one of the most powerful stories I've ever read Annette Kolodny described the isolation she felt at her university in the United States: a recurring dream where she was drowning and her colleagues would walk right past and ignore her cries for help.

I'm not suggesting that you need to bond to someone for life: or live in each other's houses. Nor am I going to lead you all in a unifying group hug. Work out the level of support/contact that you need and then make sure you get it.

- **Wavering Commitment**

Interest in and commitment to a program of study can always waver. This is particularly the case in production of a thesis: you should never underestimate the effort it takes to sustain a commitment to the same piece of writing for longer than it takes most of your friends to go through courtship, engagement, marriage, childbirth, extra-marital affairs and divorce.

The reasons that you're studying might change. The things you believe in might change. The topic you're exploring might change. But as long as you allow yourself the liberty to believe that you will get there in the end, you very probably will.

- **Losing sight of goals**

Not only is it possible to undertake postgraduate study, it's also possible to finish postgraduate study. To benefit from postgraduate study. To have a life after postgraduate study. And even, crazies of thoughts, to enjoy postgraduate study. Let's think now about what people get out of it.

- **Guilt**

This is an area where women are particularly prone to suffer. We've been conditioned to care for others; to devalue our own needs; to downplay our own intelligence

There will be time away from families and time away from friends. There will be a need to redefine your work place: there's no getting away from that.

- **Financial Stress**

All of the other personal reasons can fade into significance in the face of financial distress. Very few postgraduate students enjoy the luxury of a scholarship. Even fewer have support for their entire program. Recognising the sacrifices that you might be called on to make is a big part of being a postgraduate. Making it bearable requires a few things: find out what your rights are as a member of a particular faculty. What level of support will you get? What funding is there for conference travel? What access is there to part time work? Who gets priority?

Universities (particular Universities like CQU) need postgraduates; our funding from federal government is linked to the numbers of successful completions. Know your own value and ask for the support you need.

What do people get out of it?

In the case of a PhD: better seats on aeroplanes and a huge number of banks wanting to lend you money. Of course they quickly change their mind when they realise you're not a real doctor.

- **The chance to believe**

The single biggest benefit of postgraduate study, is that it really can be an opportunity to focus on things that you are interested in; things that you're fascinated by; committed to; things that you love; things that you believe in; things you want to change or fix, or improve on; or the things that you want to celebrate and publicise and tell all the world about.

Most forms of postgraduate study allow the student to focus on their own special area of interest. Honours theses, Masters theses (as part of a research of course work degree) and PhD and EdDs and the like actually EXPECT students to have a field of interest. They want you to obsess.

What kind of a crazy opportunity is that? In a world where people are discouraged from being too passionate about anything postgraduate study cries out for passion; it demands enthusiasm: and its enthusiasm that you focus on your own needs.

- **Fun**

So it can actually be fun? Yes, fun. If you have a topic you believe in and if you've convinced yourself that you're allowed to be spending time on it, then you can actually take the chance to enjoy it.

Who here has had any fun in the past 6 weeks?

- **Employment**

In many fields postgraduate study is a pre-requisite for employment and promotion. In higher education alone there has been a dramatic increase in the educational standards expected of staff.

- **The sense of achievement**

When you do, and it's all over, when the thesis is in or the last paper is complete. When the certificate's on the wall and the funny hat is on your head, there is undeniably a sense of relief, achievement.

Conclusions

I've talked today about ups and downs; obstacles and barriers and the kinds of myths that surround postgraduate study. I'd like to conclude by emphasising some fundamental truths:

- postgraduate study is hard; but it's not impossible (I've done it)
- postgraduate study is long; but it ends (I've finished)
- postgraduate study is serious; but it can also be fun (I've heard about that)

A lot of people say that they want to forget their experiences as a postgraduate student as quickly as possible. And I must admit that at various times over the past few years I've been convinced that I was in the process of paying back some enormous karmic debt incurred when I was obviously one of Hitler's favoured storm troopers. But it is precisely because of that feeling that I don't ever want to forget what it is to be in a position without power. I don't ever want to forget how easy it is to boost some one's morale, and how simple it is to undermine it.

But the thing that carries you through those times when your being swamped by insecurity and powerful self doubt is an ability to remember that what you're doing is important to you.

In my opinion what you really need to survive and (crazy thought) enjoy postgraduate study is sense of your own commitment. A commitment that is your own, not borrowed or passed on from someone else, not dependent on someone else, but clearly recognisable as yours. And it doesn't matter a damn bit whether that commitment is based on emotional, logical, rational or personal beliefs. All that matters is that it's yours. That you've seen it, thought about it, and claimed it as your own. The knowledge that you've carved a space for yourself in that big bad world of academia is something that people can never take away from you. That's what'll get you through.

Time Management and Planning: Taking Control of it.

Dani Stehlik

Central Queensland University
Faculty of Arts

Procrastination is the thief of Time
- Edward Young 1683-1765.

**But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near**
- Andrew Marvell 1621-1678

Master Time and you make the most of yourself
- Heraclitus 500 BC.

To enjoy freedom we have to control ourselves
- Virginia Woolf 1882- 1941

**What the hell - you might be right,
you might be wrong ... but don't just avoid it.**
- Katharine Hepburn

* * *

Introduction

It is important that we first recognise that we can do it and that there is no magic innate knowledge about study. We can all learn it although each one of us has to develop her own approach. There is no 'template' approach - no one of us has the 'answer' for us all.

I am addressing you all speaking from personal experience I have been studying since 1976 - nearly twenty years - this year hopefully will be the last (cross your fingers) in formal study when I submit the PhD. All through the twenty years of study I have worked full time except for one specific three month period when I completed the masters degree. I commenced the PhD in July 1992 and have been working full time since then, including changing jobs from Western Australia to Queensland.

It is important to consider that we all need space to undertake our work - so consider how you can negotiate 'space' - both physical (in your home) and emotional (with your

family/friends). There are always sacrifices to be made for things we want - and often you will have to sacrifice the short term (perhaps a holiday) for the long term (the outcome of your work).

Time Management - can I do it?

To consider the questions around time management for research and postgraduate study - you need to ask yourself - what kind of person am I? do I react well under stress? do I prefer to have everything organised? can I motivate myself? can I study alone?

let's consider some important questions:

- what are your study commitments?
- what are the other tasks in your week?
- are there any time wasting activities in your life?
- what other personal involvements do you want to include?
- what other personal involvements do you want to include?
- what is your concentration span?
- are you a night person or a day person?
- what are the conditions under which you study best?
- are you aware of the feelings you have before, during and after your study?

Before I consider my timetable - what are the needs around me? do I have household activities/responsibilities/ - how about children? my partner? do I work, full time? part time? - how can I negotiate around all these needs? what are the areas I can put aside for the time being? what things really need to be maintained?

let's consider **displacement activity** for a moment.

what is time wasting in my life at present? probably the number one is television - just random watching - use TV as a reward if you like it - movies, other cultural activities need to be maintained - perhaps your hobbies are your way of relaxing. I am certainly not suggesting you give everything up - but there needs to be moderation and there most likely needs to be sacrifice.

You need to consider that television, hobbies, sport, family, work - all of these things can become excuses not to do the study.

You also need to be relaxed - do undertake relaxation when you can - you perhaps know when you are more likely to be able to concentrate - less likely times would be good times to relax or enjoy the relationships around you.

As far as concentration span is concerned - everyone is different, but most of us can only really concentrate for a very focused time - at certain periods of the day. Trying otherwise is usually wasted opportunity. You need to know yourself to be able to settle this - learn to tell when you work best. Some of us can work best at home - others need to be in the library - some work best alone, others again need other people around them. If you find your concentration waning - do something physical - if you are someone who takes ages to build up to intense work, recognise this - ensure that you are honest with yourself.

Some people appear to be able to work with noise around them (I can't) - such as the radio etc. experiment with your own place and space.

Ask yourself this - where does your time go? Have you ever thought about why you simply can't get things done? Perhaps you could take time out to track your day and honestly record what you do each day and how much real time is spent in study.

efficiency = clear goals and good concentration.

To be efficient we need to know where we are going and what is expected of us. 'Studying' is often a euphemism - we need to be aware that every time we sit down to 'study' we are actually on track with our goals and stated aims ... not wasting time. develop your concentration.

Use a notebook - develop the habit of having some place to write down things in those odd moments when you think you aren't thinking about your work but you actually are. I am continually amazed as a supervisor how little my students write down in the course of their discussions with me - are they embarrassed to? do they think they will remember later? please do get into this habit - I have notebooks from the time of writing the master's thesis, and I can remember how useful they were when it came to writing up - this is a strategy I am using for the PhD too - as well as other research I am involved in.

Do undertake goal programming on a regular basis. Have a 'things to do' list and stick to it. use a diary if you need to. Do learn to develop your goals when you have worked out your planned timetable - and write them down. the act of writing makes the thing real. If you have a critical friend (and I think you should all develop such a person - perhaps through this forum) then use her to make sure she keeps you on track. Developing goals allows you to plan ahead, and planning ahead is very important, because the truism is - *you will never have enough time.*

You will also be able to imagine the task ahead - and thus it becomes something manageable rather than a huge mountain which you dread attacking. progress comes from crossing things off the list - what a feeling of satisfaction! Facing up to responsibility and the tasks ahead is better than pretending they aren't there and then panicking. Establishing priorities - this teaches us responsibility and gets the job done.

Time management and the 'backwards planning model'

I find this useful for myself - even if it is a small task which should be done in a couple of weeks - but more importantly if it is a large task that requires a lot of effort.

The first question

When does the job need to be completed? or ... when do I want to submit the written piece? thesis? dissertation etc.? That is the end point of the planning model - and we work backwards from that.

Setting the goal

Sometimes our time frames are determined for us - for example, if our supervisor sets an essay and we have its due date. sometimes, the work is large (eg. PhD) and we think - oh that's ok, we have three years to do it. I am here to tell you that it doesn't matter if it is three years or three weeks - *you need to plan*.

Let's see how this would look for a hypothetical honours thesis. (see the attached diagram).

Working back from the due date

The due date for the University is the first week of November. We know that the supervisor has to read and comment before then, and there may well be editing to do. So ... the date you have to be finished is really around four weeks before then. That means that you have to be writing for most of September - particularly if your supervisor is going to be reading what you have written - do the right thing - give the supervisor enough time. That means that all data collection/empirical work should be completed by August at the latest. That in turn means that you really should have July and August free to undertake whatever data collection needs to be done. Your course work also needs to be completed for first semester and you will probably be writing your essays for completion by June. The colloquium you are participating in is to be completed by end of April - which means that you must know what it is you are going to be doing by end of March. And this means that you will need to have discussed the project with your supervisor by at least end of February - whew!

Let's consider some important points about time management:

- if you do any study without knowing what you want to achieve from it - you have just wasted your time
- be task oriented rather than time oriented. organise a schedule and ensure that the task is measured by what you have achieved, not by how much time you have spend
- make each step of your project into stages with goals - that way you are working towards achievement - rather than looking at the whole problem and getting panicky
- set your standards as you proceed. If you know that a particular textbook is essential to your successful completion, then ensure you read it - you may be able to get away with

some things, but when the supervisor tells you that something has to be read, or sets you readings to do - do them.

- getting tired, not feeling 100% efficient? - stop and get started again later.
- things that we enjoy doing and enjoy reading tempt us - be aware that they are probably not the ones you need to spend time on - where you need to put the effort is in the things that you dislike or find difficult to do.
- a schedule is something that you have constructed - it can be revised it should be flexible. It shouldn't rule you.

I wish you every success in your endeavours.

with thanks to:

Dixon, J. (1988). *How to be a successful student without quitting the human race*. Penguin: Melbourne.

DEVELOPING A TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

TASK	SUBMIT COMPLETED THESIS FOR MARKING	HAVE FINAL EDITING OF THESIS COMPLETED & THESIS BOUND	GIVE FINAL DRAFT TO SUPERVISOR FOR COMMENT	WRITE CHAPTER DRAFTS
IDEAL DUE DATE	2nd week of NOVEMBER	end of OCTOBER	Early to Mid OCTOBER	End of AUGUST to End SEPTEMBER
TASK	COMPLETED DATA COLLECTION	COMMENCED DATA COLLECTION	GAIN ETHICAL CLEARANCE/ IDENTIFY PROJECT DATA SOURCE	NEGOTIATE PROJECT METHODOLOGY possible: COLLOQUIA
IDEAL DUE DATE	Beginning AUGUST	JULY	MAY/JUNE	early MAY
TASK	DEVELOP RESEARCH PROPOSAL	COMMENCE PRELIM. LITERATURE SEARCH	CLARIFY SCOPE OF PROJECT	NEGOTIATE SUPERVISOR AND PROJECT
IDEAL DUE DATE	APRIL	FEB./MARCH	FEB./MARCH	IF POSS. NOV/DEC. IF NOT JANUARY

Exploring the Advantages and Disadvantages of Tutoring Whilst Undertaking Post-Graduate Study

Helen Bulis

Central Queensland University
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This paper has been designed for those post-graduate women who may be offered tutoring during their time on campus. I have written it from experience and the heart and not as an academic piece punctuated with references. It is not intended to be definitive as to whether to tutor but more of an exploration, a consciousness raising exercise that women do so well before embarking into uncharted territory.

The first question that post-graduate women need to ask of themselves before accepting a tutor's lot is - what do you want to do with your degree on completion? When I first began my PhD, this question was raised by my supervisor as he suggested that the answer determines the content and type of post-graduate degree. For example, if I was to return to the Public Service, a policy analysis may be more useful than a purely theoretical perspective of my topic. Women undertake PhDs for different reasons and if one of those includes an academic career, then tutoring is very important. If an academic career is discounted, the skills acquired as a tutor are still useful in managing groups, disseminating information effectively and working within a discipline. This paper will document some of the advantages and disadvantages of tutoring taking into account the overarching question of future employment.

Women post-graduate students like any other women have to balance their lives around their many responsibilities and commitments to others and to themselves. The job of **quality** tutoring adds another layer of commitment and tasks that requires a lot of energy. Do you have all of the above? A simple list of 'for and against' is a practical start to answer this question. Here are my ideas that materialised in three semesters of tutoring.

Advantages

If you are contemplating an academic career, I believe that post-graduates need to be a part of '**university culture**'. Belonging to the Faculty community is integral to this culture - post-graduates can be included or excluded depending on many factors, personal and political. To increase your chance to belong and be seen to be part of university life, casual/temporary employment as researchers and tutors is advantageous. The degree of

your personal investment in this process may have short and long term implications within the University. Tutoring is a direct link to students, the curriculum and the lecturer all of which can be rewarding and "keeping you in the picture". Long term, the experience is documented on your Curriculum Vitae which may assist in future academic employment.

Tutoring units within your discipline can provide '**refresher courses**'. Even though you may be involved in first year subjects, I believe that re-visiting the basics of theory and application can still have relevance in your post-graduate study. The **interaction with students** often precipitates new ideas and may challenge elements of your scholarship. Learning after all is a two-way process and feminist pedagogy is consensual, non-hierarchical and collaborative. This pedagogical approach has worked for me and I suggest, the students; it is especially rewarding to observe and document the **progress of students** throughout the semester.

The fiscal advantage cannot be ignored especially those post-graduates who have no other form of **income**. Casual rates pay reasonably well and by the contact hour. Quality tutoring goes beyond the set contact hours as it includes adequate preparation (set readings *and* other research), accessibility to students and marking. The money is an advantage but needs to account for the degree of input by a committed tutor. The payment of services can add to one's **self esteem** - it is some recognition that you have skills and knowledge that can be utilised and rewarded. As a paid tutor and a post-graduate, you have some **status** which can be useful in community and university life.

Disadvantages

I have listed my personal advantages of tutoring on campus - belonging to a university culture, refresher courses, interaction with students, their progress, income, self esteem and status. My decision to tutor was not based on the pluses alone but a thorough exploration of the minuses. The major disadvantage for any post-graduate is **time** which was alluded to in the discussion on income. The amount of hours that one unit requires far exceeds the formal contact time on your contract. Preparation for a tutorial can include administration, readings, research and attending the lectures. Post-tutorial time can involve marking, more reading and **accessibility to students**. Be firm and regulate this time to a weekly/fortnightly consultation period. Students will still seek your time and knowledge within these ground rules.

The allocation of hours for tutoring has been noted in terms of time but not by the hourly **rate of pay**. Although I acknowledged the benefits of this income, for example, the seemingly attractive hourly rate, the disadvantage is the actual hours of work compared to the contracted time. These extra hours plus your tutoring period can produce a '**brain drain**'. Tutorials are tiring and require energy before, during and after the event. This commitment is on top of *not* instead of your post-graduate study.

The final disadvantage that I have encountered relates to the curriculum, the unit content. As a casual tutor, you have little input as to what is being taught. The course content may be **incongruous** to what you may consider appropriate yet you are expected to tutor. It is

a difficult task to teach without soul - it is a personal decision and not without a moral content.

Conclusion

Tutoring on campus is a very rewarding experience for post-graduate women for many reasons. What I have briefly explored in this paper are some of the advantages and disadvantages I have experienced as an academic novice. We are all different and there are no universal answers. Each woman should undertake her own exploration before making any decision to tutor. I arrived at my decision to undertake tutoring with some advice and some risk-taking and believe that I am a better person and academic since I made the decision. I would like to think that there are better students on campus as a result of that decision. Finally, I hope this snippet of experience will influence other post-graduate women take up this pedagogical and personal challenge. __

Strategies for Managing Work and Postgraduate Study.

Trish Andrews

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Educational Services

For an ever growing number of people, postgraduate qualifications are an essential part of our working life. In order to make progress in our careers or even just to keep our options open in the rapidly changing environment in which we live and work, there is a necessity to upgrade or change our skills and knowledge. For many, this is an additional activity to work and family and all the other activities that make up busy lives. This paper shares some strategies that may help to successfully - and - happily undertake postgraduate studies.

The decision to undertake further studies once you are working is not one taken lightly. Where-ever possible there is a need to consider options carefully. In a time of rapid change such as we are currently experiencing, employment requirements also change rapidly. You don't want to find yourself highly qualified in a area for which there is little demand. Look carefully at the opportunities different courses offer and the widest range of possible outcomes of undertaking such courses. Don't be afraid to get completely different skills from the ones you already have if you think there are good opportunities in those areas. You can study in areas in which you have little or no background and do it successfully. It is important to believe in your own abilities and to know that you can do things haven't done before. People often successfully change careers at different times through their working lives and good qualifications can help to do this with the minimum of difficulty and disruption.

There are many options for study available to students. You don't have to attend the institution nearest you if they don't offer the course you are interested in. Rapid growth in open and flexible learning delivery methods means that a wide variety of courses are becoming available using a range of different delivery methods. Consider OLA, fast track intensive courses and distance education. They may have something to offer you. These kinds of option may also better meet your needs and allow you to blend work and study with little difficulty.

It is essential to assume that you will be successful in whatever you undertake in your studies. When you begin a course of postgraduate studies, don't contemplate that you won't achieve what you set out to do. Your acceptance into the program and your previous

successful undergraduate studies are a clear indication of your capabilities. Even if you are undertaking studies in a completely different area, you bring to the current studies a wealth of knowledge and understanding in how to learn successfully. Be confident. Poor undergraduate results are seldom an indicator of success in later studies. It is well recognised that the majority of mature age students achieve greater results in later programs of study than they did in their initial programs. However, do be sure to set yourself realistic goals. If you decide you want to study medicine, but have never studied any science subjects, you may need to acquire these skills first then move on to the next level.

Having set yourself on the path to successfully undertaking a program of postgraduate study, how do you juggle this along with all your other activities? An important factor in managing a busy lifestyle is physical fitness. While it can seem overwhelming to include yet another element into what is already an overcrowded schedule, a fitness routine can help you to maintain all the various elements of your life. Physical fitness generally means that you sleep better and manage stress more effectively and there is no doubt that there is a lot of stress involved in combining work and study. Meditation and activities such as tai chi and yoga can also be extremely beneficial. In the midst of all this busyness, it is important to have “me” time. Exercise and other related activities enables the development and maintenance of physical and mental reserves. Stress and feelings of unwellness limit our capacity to work effectively and make it much harder to achieve goals. Even thirty minutes a day of whatever activity you enjoy, three or four times a week can mean the difference between coping and not coping.

Having acquired this busy schedule, you now need to maintain it. Careful time management is the key to success here. You need to allocate your time fairly carefully so that you make sure you are including all the elements that are important to you. There are a number of ways of doing this and you need to select the one that best suits your needs. How you organise your time will also relate to the mode of study you undertake. You need to consider the big picture here as well as the smaller one. If you have children, it is particularly important to make time for them and to ensure they understand what it is you are doing and what your commitments are to this. What do you need to do over a year, six months, three months and so on. What are likely to be the critical times and when are you going to have the most commitments? What is the best way of preparing for these times?

Another element to consider here is realistic goal setting. As mentioned earlier, it is important to consider what you need to do in order to achieve success. There may be several steps you have to undertake in order to achieve your long term goal. Undertaking an intensive program of study may not be the best option if you also have some other major event occurring in your life at the same time.

The key to successfully managing work, study and other commitments lies in a number of strategies. The ones suggested here including careful selection of your course of studies, a positive, confident attitude, physical fitness, good time management and realistic goals are just some ideas for undertaking this special time in your life with maximum benefit.

An Indigenous Experience of Postgraduate Study

Bronwyn Fredericks

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Introduction

My name is Bronwyn Fredericks. I am originally from south-east Queensland and now live and work in Rockhampton. I am currently employed as a Lecturer within the Health Science Faculty at the Central Queensland University in Rockhampton.

I graduated this year with a Masters of Education from the Queensland University of Technology. I have a Bachelor of Education (QUT) and a Diploma of Teaching- Secondary (BCAE). Presently I am enrolled in a Master of Education Studies (University of Tasmania) and will commence a PhD. in Health Science through Central Queensland University in 1997. I was elected as the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) National Indigenous Peoples' Officer for 1996 and the Vice-President for 1997. In this paper I will present some of the issues that have surfaced for me as an Indigenous woman undertaking postgraduate studies and for other Indigenous women.

Postgraduate Student Experiences

As a post-graduate student I have become increasingly more aware of issues and implications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I began to articulate the problems and naming the issues in a more assertive manner.

I began to see that some of the people who taught about social justice, equity, access, participation and rights for all were sometimes also perpetuating the problems. I saw the institution in which I was learning about these issues, along with affirmative action and EEO, being a place which didn't practice what its teaching staff and researchers were advocating. Other universities were and are similar.

A good supervisor is hard to find. If you are an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander woman it can be even more difficult. Difficult in the sense of finding someone or some people who are knowledgeable about Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islands knowledges and the ethics and protocols that are and also that need to be put in place. As an Indigenous woman you will more than likely have home / family commitments, community commitments and study commitments.

As an Indigenous woman you may have Sister, Mother, Aunt and Grandmother commitments. Do not mistake younger women with no children as having no family commitments. Frequently I am judged as being a woman who has no children and therefore no responsibilities on the 'home front'. I have Aunt responsibilities to numerous children within an extended network. I am additionally given specific tasks to do by community members because I don't have children and can travel and go out.

One of my friends is in her late thirties trying to do her Masters, has children at home and two grandchildren along with being on two community committees in her area of specialty. There are also expectations about participating in community activities and maintaining community links. Trying to find supervision which acknowledges this is difficult. I myself have been told in the past, just forget about all that other stuff and concentrate on what needs doing here. That is hard when the other things are here for ever, they are part of life, part of what it means to be in community. I am always caught in terms of if I deny community do I in fact deny myself, as I am part of community, as it is community that nurtures me, that feeds me, that supports me, that is there for me.

At an Indigenous Postgraduate Colloquia at QUT this year the concepts of non-Indigenous 'gatekeepers' of Indigenous knowledge was discussed. In the discussion a range of things arose, which include:

- when you approach a faculty you wish to study from and being directed to non-Indigenous "Indigenous experts" who work there without reference to any others;
- when you help legitimise the non-Indigenous "Indigenous experts" by being a student under them, that is, it is not an equal working relationship;
- Indigenous knowledges controlled, monitored and sometimes stolen by supervisors and a faculty or university from which the student is studying;
- being told as an Aboriginal person by a non-Aboriginal person/s that what you were doing was not Aboriginal as the supervisor and faculty staff knew what was Aboriginal and what wasn't due to their studies and level of expertise;
- being told to find quotes for what you were stating in written work, when it came from highly respected Elders from within the community;
- being pushed to document some processes and actions within your field of study, your community when it is inappropriate in terms of protocol or considered unsafe to document that for fear of it falling into the wrong hands;
- questions are raised over your writing ability when it is really about writing style and concepts of academia and what is academic;
- problems with "universal truths" and faculties and supervisors not wanting to move out of the boundaries of "universal truths";
- overt and indirect racism displayed by other students and staff from faculty of study;
- trying to get an Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islands person as a supervisor, not being told that they can be a supervisor if they don't have a higher degree under the "high level of expertise" wording in selection of supervisors;
- problems of supervisors insisting on co-authorship when they have no right to the Indigenous knowledge, they have only right to guiding the process and as someone

asked “Isn’t that their job and don’t the faculties get money and index points for every higher degree student anyway”; and

- working within an Indigenous framework and conceptual space which needs protecting as they affect every facet of life, including study and the maintenance of balance.

The range of issues raised was extremely interesting and a reflection of what is happening in the higher education sector in regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander postgraduate student research and studies.

Scholarships

Competition for scholarships is based on merit and generally academic merit alone. While some people will state that this is fair it is additionally unfair! In fact it is very unfair!

People tell me “Oh you have achieved so much”, “you have done so much” when it comes down to scholarships I have probably done too much as what I have done has taken me away from sitting on my bum, studying and writing in order to achieve the grades I need to earn a scholarship. If I in fact sat on my bum, studied and wrote for my own personal gain in the sense of grades and that was my sole purpose then in essence I would be selfish and extremely individual focused. I would also be open to criticism from the Aboriginal community.

For myself, there is community organisations and groups that seek assistance, students to see and assist and relationships to maintain. How do you do both and remain in balance within yourself? If I didn’t pay attention to the requests and didn’t put time into students and relationships, I would have nothing. I would be questioned about what I was really doing? Why was I really studying? Who would gain from it in the long run?

If scholarships were more balanced in their approach to who receives them, recognising a range of achievements that contribute to a well rounded scholar then it would be fair.

Indigenous postgraduate students are more likely to be mature age and have economic and family responsibilities than non-Indigenous postgraduate students. This factor I believe is not taken into account in relation to awarding scholarships, grants and other postgraduate study support mechanisms currently in place.

If Indigenous women don’t win a scholarship they can go on to the ABSTUDY Doctorate Allowance administered by DEETYA . This amount in gross terms is the same as the awards under the Australian Research Council. However, the Australian Taxation Office ruled that as from July 1996 it would tax the Living Allowance paid by DEETYA. Postgraduate students who receive APRA’s and University specific awards are tax exempt. This places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in a position of direct disadvantage to other students on awards for postgraduate studies. I am aware of one student who can no longer live on the living allowance and is about to throw in his PhD. as a result. He is eight months off completion but too far in debt to continue his studies. How can this be regarded as fair and encouraging?

Issues of Money

I hear of non-indigenous people within universities getting grants to study or do a project into an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issue or in a community when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have applied and missed out. It has happened in the community in which I live. I at times question what are regarded as appropriate qualifications, who makes the decisions and why?

In all of this I am not saying that non-indigenous people can't apply for research grants and I'm not saying that the grants need to go to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people just because they put in. I recognise that skills are needed to do the work and sometimes the skills may not be present in a community or across communities.

I am saying that there needs to be a way to combine the two, there needs to be more partnerships, there needs to be skills development and empowerment through working together and sharing knowledge. My short experience tells me that this is difficult to do in environments which operate like capital marketplaces where knowledge is the product, where competition is high and the next project is just around the corner.

In almost every university Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are on short term contracts. There are very few who are tenured. Many of these same Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are additionally endeavouring to complete higher degrees. What has been brought to my attention in a number of forums and through discussion as the Indigenous Officer with CAPA is the disgust expressed by some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people when they can not get Study Leave to undertake their research towards their higher degree due to their continued employment status and a non-Indigenous tenured staff member gets Study Lave to undertake research in an Indigenous area.

Some people will say that is the nature of the game. That is 'just how things are'. It's like this due to equality but maintaining it inequality is maintained. The disgust is articulated by words like "We're all right to study but on a day to day basis survival basis they couldn't give a shit", "people like that study us, make careers off us and leave us to fight alone" and "its all just rhetoric, they're all just rhetoric".

Other Research

Recently I heard a female academic discussing how she was going to look into some health issues from a feminist framework, she said she wanted to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in her study. I stated that was good but questioned her in regards to the feminist theoretical base. I was told that she was on about equity, paternalist structures, control over women's bodies through medical processes, reproduction cycles and how oppressed women are... I questioned her in terms of where do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women fit within feminism? Do we have to fit? I raised that she needed to examine while looking at the oppressed state of women, the role women have played in oppressing Indigenous men and women in Australia's colonial history. I stated that I believed that the process of colonialism is still going on, and that some women despite stating that they want

equity failed to examine how they themselves can be exclusionary and racist and thus at times further adding to the oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

I referred her to the work of Jackie Huggins who has highlighted some important issues in the area of feminism as it relates to Aboriginal women. I proposed if she didn't examine her theoretical base she would add ethical dilemma's because she would be assuming that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have the same beliefs as non-indigenous women about feminism. She would be classifying women according to biology and this universalism which is driven by the dominant culture, sometimes cuts out the thinking of many other women.. These are many ethical dilemmas that I have come across in terms of women's issues and in women's research that generally are derived from a generalisations, universalism and ethnocentrism.

What is this thing called academic?

In terms of where I stand as an academic I have been asked in this brief time "why I don't like non-indigenous people teaching or researching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues?" My answer is not that I don't like it... my answer is related to the power that is sometimes maintained by non-indigenous people who end up owning the material, the knowledge, who do not empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the processes, who do not assist in skills development, who are unwilling to stand beside as equals and who are unwilling to back off when they need to.

I have been questioned why I do not aim at writing in refereed journals as they carry much more weight in terms of academic excellence. I ask weight determined by whom? I also clearly state that it may be good academically in terms of academia but why am I here?, who is my audience?, would I be writing for writings sake? I question the motives. If I don't write for these journals do I not prove myself as a good scholar? I ask them could they write for a community based journal or another type of circulation? could they, write like I write?

I have found other ways of earning brownie points in terms of the Composite Index, which still allows me to undertake work that I feel is highly relevant and important to community. Which still allows the copyright to be owned by me, members of the community and organisations.

What can be done?

Recognise us as women, Indigenous women. Respect us for who we are, respect our culture, our history and our knowledges. Recognise that we have a right to an education and to access education, also understand that we need to express ourselves in an Indigenous framework within that education system. Encourage us and support us.

The current inequity that is perpetuated and oppression within the collective group known as women needs to be addressed by all of us as women. It needs acknowledging and to be worked on, for how can we be fighting about justice and equality when there is inequity and oppression of other women by women. We as Indigenous women need you to stand up and be counted when you know something is going on that shouldn't be going on. We need you to say in the forums that we're not in what about our Indigenous sisters. We need you to say how does this impact on all women. Don't stay quiet. Staying quiet can be said to be in agreement. If you are unsure about what we think, ask us. If you are unsure about where we stand on an issue, ask us. If you are unsure about what we want, ask us. We will let you know.

We need to do this to stand strong as women together. We need to do this to build a solid future for all women, for today and for tomorrow.

Start thinking about how you relate, how you interact, how you speak to and about other women, different types of women. What is happening around you to other women? What do you let slide by? When you talk about women who do you mean? Which women? Do you exclude? Include? Do you find out what other women think? Do you assume you know about women? Do you speak in universal truths about women?

What do you need to do?

Characteristics and Expectations of the Student / Supervisor Relationship

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At the “Quality in Postgraduate Research” conference that I attended this year, Michael J McBain from Monash University presented a paper entitled “The crumbling marriage: institutional responses to breakdowns in student-supervisor relations”. Many of the ideas to be shared during this session incorporate items from this paper.

The supervisory process is a complex series of interactions between the supervisor, the student and the topic which is intended to result in the production of a thesis. The supervisor assists the student to align their topic in order to work towards an achievable goal. The relationship between student and supervisor is significantly defined by the institutional setting. Expectations held by the student and the supervisor should be well matched.

Supervising a research student is perceived as being completely different to lecturing or tutorial teaching. The relationship between the supervisor and candidate is more like that of a mentor and mentoree rather than of a teacher and pupil. It is usually a one-on-one relationship and is indeed confronting and challenging in many ways. Many authors have likened the relationship to a marriage. Whether a marriage of convenience, of destruction or of lasting respect and affection depends on the characteristics of the supervisor, the student and of the institution in which they are working.

The following examples of general characteristics of supervisors and candidates are listed in order to assist you to consider the qualities that you might be looking for in a supervisor. If you compare these with your own characteristics as a candidate, are they compatible?

Characteristics of Supervisors:

- time since PhD
- experience as supervisor
- personal style
- research experience
- interest in research topic

- teaching load
- administrative responsibilities
- social skills (patience, forbearance, cultural awareness etc)

Characteristics of Candidates:

- research experience
- time in institution
- personal initiative
- cultural background
- writing skills
- confidence
- social skills
- background in research field
- finance
- planning skills
- available time

Having looked at the characteristics of supervisors and candidates, there are a few risk factors that should be highlighted. Any one of these risk factors on its own does not indicate a definite problem, however, a combination of factors might be cause for concern. Before embarking on a program of postgraduate research, you may wish to consider the risk factors highlighted here in order to gauge the likelihood of completing your program of research successfully.

Risk Factors for Supervisors:

- little or no supervisory experience
- solitary research profile
- high teaching load
- limited interest in student or topic

Risk Factors for Candidates:

- high-pressure job
- young family
- no research experience

The characteristics of institutions indicate those aspects that might effect the quality of supervision and resources available to support a particular research project.

Characteristics of Institutions:

- age
- size
- funding
- research culture
- research training
- top-level commitment to academic development
- codes of supervisory practice
- supervisory training
- size of research school

Risk Factor for Institutions:

- new institution
- few staff with doctorates
- limited research funds

As a new university the risk factors attributed to institutions do appear a little overwhelming for us at CQU. However, supervisors and candidates should be aware that there are many strategies in place in our institution to help offset these risk factors.

Strategies to Overcome Risk Factors:

- a code of practice
- monitoring progress every six months
- grievance procedures for each faculty
- inductions programs for students and supervisors
- associate supervision and external supervision
- exit surveys