

A THESIS IN THE HOUSE: FAMILY MATTERS

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ABSTRACT *This paper is taken from a wider study of the experience of researching and writing a thesis. My interviews with 57 PhD graduates in Education included many accounts of how women and men managed their time and organised space. Where, and when, do thesis students read, think, and write? They spoke of struggles to 'make time', 'clear space,' or 'create a private place.' How did they reconcile the spatial, temporal, and relational demands – simultaneous and competing – of thesis research and domestic life? How did they handle the physical and emotional stresses of 'mapping' the thesis into their everyday lives? The interface between domestic life and intellectual production is an issue that has received little attention in educational scholarship. I draw on geographical, as well as educational, theorists to approach this question.*

INTRODUCTION

It's a steamy day in a late Waikato summer. Cicadas hiss and crackle in a harakeke bush outside my open windows. This used to be Kate's room but, as daughters do, she grew up and left home. George, my husband, now stores his books and papers in the converted laundry that used to be my tiny study. My new work place is comparatively spacious and I luxuriate in it. Under the windows is a couch-sleeper on which I pile cushions when I want to read. Occasionally visitors sleep on it if there is overflow from the spare bedroom next door. On the pale painted walls are posters from my own or my visitors' travels – an aboriginal land rights poster, a tapa cloth from Fiji. There are portraits of women who inspire me – Freda Kahlo frowns over my right shoulder. Photos of family – five generations – hang in a corner where the sun can't fade them. Walls of books and papers – everything from Simone de Beauvoir's piece on the Marquis de Sade to the *New Zealand Women's Weekly*...a confused melee of the academic texts of my trade, magazines, photo albums, and novels. I stare at the colourful screen of my Macintosh PowerBook G3. Its background 'desktop' design is tiled pictures of my two-and-a-half-year-old grandson, Jackson. His mouth smeared with chocolate, he is pictured playing with a tall yellow crane on his other grandmother's carpet last Christmas. Here is my place. And here I can think freely.

Now let me introduce Dee, a recent PhD graduate¹, as she talks about her thinking spaces. Dee is one of the women I interviewed for my recently completed research on the experiences and perspectives of Education PhD students. I interviewed 57 of the 200 or so who have graduated with this qualification since 1950 – 33 of the men and 24 of the women (Middleton, 2001). These interviews included many accounts of how these students managed their time and organised space. They spoke of struggles to 'make time', 'clear space', or 'create a private

¹ All names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

place' in which to read, think, and write. Listen to Dee's description of the early stages of her doctoral research:

The first six months were terribly angst driven. I wandered around reading way out, this great breadth of Pacific Ocean reading, in order to try and write something that was fine and focussed and blazing – only to find that I couldn't bridge the gap between the Pacific Ocean of reading to this fine line of academic writing. And that was painful – trying to tame the ocean, trying to pull it into something that was going to be really focused. That took six months and I felt like I was wasting time. I could hear the clock, “ tick, tick, tick”. And I could feel my anxiety levels rising 'cause I was on study leave to begin it and I just felt it was going nowhere. I got very fit. I went for lots and lots of runs and after each run I would think, “ I've got it now and I know where I am going!” – only to go and do a classroom observation and find that I was more confused than ever.

There is poetry in Dee's account – a “Pacific Ocean of reading” – and metaphors of 'bridges', 'gaps', and 'fine lines'. There are also images of movement within and between spaces – peripatetic work-habits of 'wandering around' to read, and thinking while going 'on runs'. Similarly, Dee speaks of the pressures of 'institutional' time – the timeframe of her allocated weeks of study leave from her university job, the length of time university regulations allow for completion of a doctorate, and the minutiae of daily timetables in the schools in which she does her fieldwork. David Harvey called this “the practical rationalisation of space and time” (1990, p. 259).

Feminists have written many texts on the thesis-writing experience. These include collections of autobiographical essays on the research and writing processes (Christian-Smith & Kellor, 1999; Neilson, 1998; Neumann & Peterson, 1997). There are handbooks for thesis supervisors and students aimed at helping both to improve practice (Phillips & Pugh, 1987; Rountree & Laing, 1996), and research-based studies of the supervisory process (Grant, 2000; Holbrook & Johnston, 1999). However, apart from the brief autobiographical accounts, there is little research on the *spatial* dimensions of thesis study. Where, and when, do thesis students read, think, and write? Thesis work takes place in multiple locations. How do students reconcile the spatial, temporal, and relational demands – simultaneous and competing – of thesis research, work-places, and domestic lives? How do they handle the physical and emotional stresses of 'mapping' the thesis into their everyday working and personal lives? I have addressed the thesis-work-place dilemma elsewhere (Middleton, 2001). In this paper I explore the interface between a thesis and domestic life. This is an important feminist issue – not only for the women who are students themselves, but also for those who are the partners, spouses or lovers of thesis students. The following discussion takes into account these multiple kinds of relationships to a thesis – direct (as in the case of women doing theses themselves), and indirect (women who live in an intimate relationship with a thesis writer).

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN?

In historical texts, the reading and writing scholar has commonly been portrayed as a monadic individual locked away to think and write in seclusion. Scholarly works have been characterised as products of individual, disembodied thinking minds, and as grounded in "conceptions of originality and of the bounded individual with property in the self" (Haraway, 1997, p. 72). Historians have described the development of the persona of the 'man of letters' and how this was accompanied by the "insertion of truly private and individualised male space – the study – into the house" (Harvey, 1996, p. 228). The territory of the rational autonomous man of Enlightenment print-based culture, the study was "an intellectual space beyond sexuality and the power of the woman, it was the space of an isolated male identity engaged in writing" (Harvey, 1996, p. 228). When, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, intellectual women sought admission to a 'rational man's education', a 'room of one's own' (Woolf, 1928) became an object of feminist demand. "It was," wrote Harvey, "from this kind of space that a certain kind of 'monadic' discourse became possible" (1996, p. 228). The dedicated study-room in the home signalled "a withdrawal from the 'chaos' of daily life and the shaping of knowledge and identity through the production of texts produced in enclosed, secure, and very private spaces" (ibid, p. 228).

Max had such a space: "I had split from my wife and was living alone". He said that, for him, "there was a kind of mystique to do with the PhD itself which I saw in quasi sort of monastic religious terms – this kind of process that you entered into with the material that you were dealing with". He used marijuana to intensify his focus, as he found that it enlarged his 'inner space':

I was smoking quite a lot of dope and various other things. All of that channelled me into almost adopting a sort of reverence to the text and engaging in a kind of idolatry with the [theorists I was studying], and that's really obsessive. It's like a stalker, an academic stalker, stalking his texts, following him around, reading his thoughts, reading their correspondence and letters and that sort of thing. I think it's totally unhealthy.

He explained how he had "very little money" and described his 'monastic cell' as improvised:

I was 'on the bones of my arse', so to speak. I came across this wonderful idea which was to take one of those old doors down and to have a couple of chains at either end and to hang it from a wall. So you had this huge kind of desk and you could anchor it and it was an absolutely brilliant work-space. I had this old villa. It was quiet and it was a great working place and I worked from home basically.

Such monastic seclusion, however, was the exception. Thirty of the interviewees had young children living at home; 13 had no children; others had teenaged or adult children. Six were single in the sense of never-married; four moved into new relationships during the thesis; five were divorced at the time of the thesis; 10 marriages or long-term partnerships broke up during the thesis.

Many of those interviewed had done their thinking and writing in a 'room of their own' at home. Creating such space usually involved complex negotiations.

Freda and her husband “built a house. I wanted a study and the architect drew the study out of it, eliminated the study from the building plans. I said, ‘I need a study, ‘and he said, ‘People just think they need one, but they never really use them’. I fought and I got this tiny little compact space”. Harold also sought isolation and, like several others, had “a bach out the back, a little outside room, so I used to work out there because I could spread my paper round. But it was unheated; it was unbearable. It was not insulated in summer – it was like an oven even with all the windows opened and in winter it was like an icebox. So it was hard to work”. Similarly, James had a study at home that was outside: “It was a little sort of detached den outside the house. So I used to retreat out there”. He described how his insulation from the family impressed his growing children who, now adults,

can still remember their mother saying, ‘Don't disrupt Daddy, he's working on his PhD’. They never knew what this PhD meant but they can still remember that Daddy was working on his PhD, he was buried away out in his study. I can remember working out there often late at night and so on when the children were in bed. But I didn't do any PhD work in my office [on campus] because I found that I had to keep the two things separate.

Some, whose homes and workplaces did not afford such seclusion, sought it elsewhere. One man, whose wife worked in a profession, said that he had “spent weekends and weekends in my wife's office in town because it was the quietest place I could be”. Similarly, a man with a high-powered (non-academic) job as well as young children had worked in a friend's house:

Every Sunday I would pack up my kit bag and I would go over there. I would try and start work by about 8.30am or 9.00am and I would work through until 5.00pm or 5.30pm every Sunday and every public holiday. One of the difficult things about that, and I'd never recommend it, is because you've got to engross yourself when you're writing it up, it's got to become a thing that you become immersed in. But with me it never could be, because I had my job.

The study – as Harvey and others had argued – had been designed for the rationally autonomous scholarly man. In the 1920s, on the basis of her studies of the lives of women novelists, Virginia Woolf (1978, p. 64) lamented that “if a woman wrote, she would have to write in the common sitting room”. For Woolf, the comings and goings of others in the household were distractions and intruded into the writing process. However, some of those interviewed – both women and men – disliked feeling ‘cut off’ and preferred to feel ‘in contact’ with their families. For example, Mary observed that “I've got a study now, but I don't use it because I'm attuned to working at the table. I don't mind a bit of noise and music and people coming in and out. But that's probably because I grew up in a big family where you had to work like that”. Christine described how she

became quite adept ... at managing to write in my study with four or five rather large kids thumping around the rest of the house. I am a person who can write for half an hour and get up and bake a batch of scones and go back and write for another hour and a half - no problem.

I can write in a messy situation and I learnt that I had to do that. That was [also] the way I'd operated [as a senior teacher] - going into the study to write policies and going out to check the dinner was OK and going back to write more policies. You learn to do that.

A number of the fathers interviewed felt similarly. Noel explained: "I had a little study off the bedroom at home. It was a purpose designed place, although I found it very difficult to work in it because it was too disconnected from that life that was still going on around me. I worked very comfortably with having a lot of things happening around me". Similarly, Craig described how he and his wife "had a fourth bedroom which we allocated as a study for the duration of that project. That was a god send because it was actually adjacent to the family room so I was always connected still to the family". Nigel, too, had "decided that most people's lives got wrecked by living in libraries, so what I did was I simply went to the library and I photocopied all the articles. I brought them home and I read them there". He explained that:

I never worked at the office and always worked at home. I built a kind of a bedroom/study, which was right adjacent to the dining room. The door was always open so I was always accessible. My children were aged round 18-20 at the time, so they were not young children ... Most of the work was occurring say 7.00pm through to 9.00pm and then some days I'd get up at 4.00am in the morning and do a couple of hours before breakfast.

Not all, however, were able to work at home. Some of the full-time students, who were trying to sustain themselves with scholarships and casual employment, used library space and/or departmental graduate rooms. For example: "I was in a one-bedroom bed-sit. I couldn't afford anything more. I had no space to work at so whatever space the university could provide me with as a PhD student was my space. And so my thesis was largely completed at the university rather than in my living area". Some had acted as hostel wardens - earning free board in exchange for what were often minimal duties. Emma was young and single and had won

a total free fellowship, no responsibilities! It was there for me to be basically a role model for the other students without having to do anything - to be a role model. I just had to sit at the high table. It was very formal ... Girls had to be in dresses and boys a shirt and tie ... It was a very safe secure environment. I thrived in that homely environment and I could focus on my PhD. There was a cleaner to clean the room and that was great.

While for some it was a question of 'making room' wherever they could, for others the decision to work on campus rather than at home was a deliberate choice. For example, Gordon said that he had written his thesis "mostly in my office at the university, because I tried to keep a division between work and home. I have had a study at home but it is usually set up with my [hobby]... I don't really like being in my study at home for university work - I see a tension between things". Several other men also liked to keep domestic life and academic work apart. Barry's wife was also a student and needed the use of their domestic study-space. Barry described how he accommodated this: "We never had any difficulty in negotiating

the fact that family time was in the early evening. I would often come back to work very late – I would come back [on campus] at 8.00pm and stay there until well after midnight”.

The location of the candidate’s work was sometimes influenced by the technology available to them at the time and as appropriate to the stage the research was at. Ralph wrote his thesis at a time when handwriting was the norm:

I was a family man, struggling on a junior lecturer's salary ... I didn't have a study or anything like that. Most of my thesis writing was done on a card table in whichever room was not being used in the house – lot of it in the bedroom. In other words, I had minimal facilities. I would disappear and work on my thesis and my wife would bring up the children.

In the case of Gary and his family, the clatter of a manual typewriter at night was a concern, so he wrote

at work, because it's so close. What I did was to finish work, come home and then go over there again. I wrote it all on a mechanical typewriter. I would go back over there at about 8.00pm and set everything up and then get to work. I'd come home and the house would be in darkness. If I was on a roll, if the writing was going nicely, I'd write away till midnight, 1.00am or something. I'd always stop at an easy place, so that you flopped and the next day was just straightforward. I'd do that, come back, and I could do that every night. And I'd go and work on it in the weekend.

The introduction of mainframe computer technology in the early 1980s had further implications for the location of students’ data-processing work. A student at a provincial university described having to access a mainframe computer at set hours:

Because my data needed statistical analyses – no mainframe computer here - we used to use the Burroughs computer at a big city University. It was a thing about as big as a room. We used to have a telephone link from 5.00pm to 6.00pm every night – that was my campus’s bought time. You would get a telephone link established. We had these punch card machines and a thing like a typewriter. You would put all of the data into these cards by typing them in. And then they would go into big racks and into this machine. You would work out – it was hair raising – the instructions to the computer. It would proceed to analyse data at that end and then masses of paper would pour out onto the floor on the machine at this end.

Freda, a young mother, described how, during the statistical analysis phase of her work, she had spent nights in the campus computer laboratory and had slept only “one hour a night six days a week for six months”. With a young baby in the house, “How do you ever get the uninterrupted time to do the kind of theorising I needed to do?” She explained:

I used to love it, it was one of the great privileges of my life. I would be on this mainframe and I would get hours with not a soul. At first you had to get through the barrier of tiredness and I'd take to the coffee. Then I remember the sadness when the birds would start to sing and you'd know that the sunrise was coming and I had to stop... I'd drive home ... and be there when the baby woke up and set her up for the babysitter. She wasn't missing me more than any other baby was because I was away while she was sleeping ... I must have been manic to do it, but it was just magic. And that's the way I brought all the data together.

This account vividly highlights the intertwining of academic knowledge (the research methods that demanded statistical analysis); the form, ownership and location of the technology she needed; the spatial and temporal partitioning of the university as an institution; and her domestic situation as mother of a young baby. Or, in Harvey's terms:

Places are constructed and experienced as material ecological artefacts and intimate networks of social relations. They are the focus of the imaginary, of beliefs, longings and desires (most particularly with respect to the psychological pull and push of the idea of 'home'). They are an intense focus of discursive activity, filled with symbolic and representational meanings, and they are a distinctive product of institutional, social, and political-economic power. (1996, p. 316)

Place, then, is a key consideration in any exploration of the crafting and care of the 'scholarly self' (Foucault, 1986; Rose, 1993). How, then, are the reading and writing bodies of PhD students positioned – in the sense of both their physical location and their 'head-space' – in relation to families, friends and colleagues?

FAMILY MATTERS

The crafting of the self as scholar does not usually occur in isolation. Interviewees described how various intimate networks of social relations within households and families were stretched to fit around their theses. Even planning for parenthood sometimes took a thesis in the family into account. Ross said that he

was fortunate that when I was doing my PhD – perhaps it was planned you might say – we didn't have a family. Shortly after I finished my PhD, we both decided it was time to have a family. I admire people who have family commitments and do a thesis, I really do. It is exceptionally difficult and I don't know whether I could have done that or, had I done that, it would have taken far longer to complete the thesis. We chose not to have a family then. That meant we were older first time parents, which has its advantages but also has its disadvantages in terms of lower energy levels. In that way there was a number of things that the PhD, in terms of your own lifestyle, changed and had to be factored in.

While Ross and his wife had planned their family around the thesis, Felix – already a father of young children – had prioritised getting the thesis done in the

minimum time. His choice of research methodology took this into account, and the design of the family home maximised his participation in family life. He explained: "I was determined for my family's sake to do the thing in three or four years or not at all and I thought that if I had gone for three or four or five years and it hadn't been wrapped up I would have thrown it away. It wasn't worth that long ten years sacrifice – it had to be done quickly".

Many of those with children living at home said they had created 'space' through organising their time, as Felix explained:

I worked incredible hours – crazy hours I suppose, but I must have been young enough and fit enough to take it. I set up an office at home in a bedroom so that I never went away from the house to work apart from my standard work hours. Weekends, late at night, I always worked at home because I wanted to keep the family connection and not always be seen to be away somewhere.

Management of time and space in relation to the schedules and needs of partners and children was complex. One mother – married to another thesis student – explained the family decision to send their child to boarding school: "It was easier just psychologically to know that she was safe, getting a good education, and didn't need to worry about what her parents were doing". She told of how "our daughter used ring up from boarding school saying, 'Have you finished, have you finished, have you finished?'"

Several other couples were both students and/or both holding full-time or part-time jobs. Owen and his wife juggled two jobs, child-care and his thesis. With one car between them in a town with poor public transport, the household's daily organisation was complicated:

I had the morning shift so I would have a lecture and I timed the notes so that the baby required feeding (we had bottles) – just at the right time. Five minutes later you could have a break and then back into another hour's talk. It all worked quite well really. So it was about half and half ... It was two buses, you see, and so I had to decide whether I was going to work at home or work at university.

Simon's life became similarly complicated when his children were little and his wife got a part-time job. He described an arrangement whereby

one of us would always be at home when the kids came home. In particular I used to do two things. I'd have a meal with the family at night, I'd put the kids down and read them stories. And as they got older I'd have a recreational time with them ... I'd spend a period every day where I would go and hit a ball around with them. I'm also a tramper and a climber and we built those in to our family lifestyle. I just made strenuous efforts to get a balance. I was also a runner. I used to run every day between work, family, recreation and spending time with the kids. It meant burning the midnight oil, but I was a bit younger then and you just did it.

Kate – a full-time doctoral student – and her self-employed husband also shared responsibility for organising the children’s schedules and care. They also made use of public child-care facilities:

I had particular days in the week where I would pick them up at 3.00pm. They had an after-school programme some days, but other days they'd come home and be in the house while I worked so that they didn't always have to be at the after-school programme. So there were days when I had those kinds of breaks and I pretty much would stop work about 5.00pm, 5.30pm. But then, in the later part of the PhD, I would work every night as well to get through it. But I was really clear about weekends not being part of the deal. I would always have those off.

She devised regular daily routines to structure her working day and explained that:

One of the things that was really important was I walked the kids to school and then would come back and start work. That was a demarcation to the beginning of the day. That worked really well. And I'd find it really hard, if I didn't walk them to school, to actually get started. But it was quite easy for me to leave a state of chaos in the kitchen and start work.

Others – divorced or married to a partner with children from a previous relationship – demarcated their working time on a weekly or fortnightly basis according to the presence or absence of the children. For example, Maureen was a stepmother whose stepdaughter “came every other weekend. This sometimes was tricky in terms of the space because she was in my study”. Maureen explained how she and her step-daughter – an academically able high school student – accommodated to each other’s spatial requirements: “I put the computer in the kitchen because as a teenager she liked to sleep quite long hours; sleep in in the morning. But it wasn't too bad – it was pretty good. She is very high achieving so she would sit and we would study together”. Jeanette, a divorcee, shared custody of the children with her former husband on a week-about basis and this demarcated her ‘on’ and ‘off’ times for her thesis: “in my non child week I worked hard – I had no children, no relationship and so I could. No social life and that's how I got it done pretty quickly. So I wasn't left with trying to juggle everything all the time. Though the week that I had the children I didn't do any PhD work.” However, in the final writing-up phase she had needed to modify this somewhat. She did this by writing a page a day:

I had quite a clinical approach to that ... It got done. I don't think it impacted at all on the quality of it and it made it manageable and I survived! ... The kids would also know: “Have you done your page yet mum?” Because I would start once they had gone to bed at 8.00pm or if I'd managed to have any time during the day. And I was also getting up at 5.00am or 6.00am in the morning.

She explained that, for her, the thesis "wasn't all encompassing, it wasn't my life's work, it wasn't any of those things". She was able, she said, to compartmentalise it in her life:

It was a part of what I was doing. I was passionate about it, but I was equally able to put it aside and treat it quite like any other task that needed to be done. It was just applying myself. When I was writing up, I knew how long it had to be and I divided it by the number of days I had left. I knew it had to grow by that much a day so I wouldn't go to bed at night until it had!

Some of the women interviewed had been solo parents throughout the thesis process. For these women, children's bed-times created working space:

I was a single mother living in a little two-bed-roomed house. My daughter would tootle off to bed ... I remember writing on my bed and in the lounge and the dining room in the summer because it was cold in winter, and so I wrote it late. It was good. Those hours have always been good for me and they still are.

Another solo mother said that her daughter "used to comment on the fact that she did have to go to bed this early. But she always went to bed early and so basically once she was asleep around 8.30pm I worked and I guess it was a hobby and a passion, because I really loved the research".

Those who lived with partners or spouses told of how their intimate relationships were affected by the thesis work. For some, their partners had been strongly supportive and several commented that they could not have completed without that support and encouragement. A few of the men had wives who were qualified typists and these women had typed thesis drafts for them: "My wife always remembers that she would be typing with one hand and rocking the pram with the other. So it really was a family affair, and the thesis dominated family life". Mark – one of those who had to work nights on a campus main-frame computer – regretted that he had been forced to work

at night a lot and every weekend and when it was holidays – it wasn't holidays because it was the only time you got a chance to do anything. For a long slog of five or six years you were asking a lot of your family. And I got a lot of help from my wife. She'd do a moan now and again – it was always that I needed a break. But it was really her that needed the break. It took a lot.

Similarly, a married woman paid tribute to her "wonderful husband" who took their son to school every day and "managed everything to do with him and school". She had additional help from her own mother who lived nearby and "was very busy being my house manager during the doctoral time. She literally managed a lot of things that gave me freedom and time". A solo mother told of her strongly supportive extended family and friends, including: "a great mother – she was wonderful. And also other family – my brother and sister-in-law, taking my daughter for holidays and Mum coming over and looking after her". And for a Pacific Islands student, "it wasn't just my work but it was a family project, because

without my brothers' financial support I would never have got a PhD. So on a personal level it was the outcome of the family effort and cooperation".

Some of the interviewees had children who had grown up and left home. However, they continued to experience family pressures as they lived through the changes characteristic of mid-life. For example, Margaret became a grandmother: "Our grandchildren were born during the process of doing the PhD, which raises the issue of maintaining balance with the rest of your life." Older students might also be faced with the ill-health of their own parents, as in the case of Margaret's "mother's illness – I did feel I was consumed by this study at the time when I might have wanted to give time elsewhere".

Some students were members of broader communities that held high expectations of them, such as one single woman from a Pacific Island community:

Knowing that I don't have a specific lecture time I think my church community expected me to be there to do things for them – translate, take people to the doctors whenever they needed a translator. ... I was also doing some work for the church ... In terms of my own upbringing I was expected to be at church. But I was able to explain to my church leaders that I would not be able to make it to church most Sundays, that I could just come and go to the meeting when they discussed the [job I was doing for them] and all that. I think I had an open communication with my community knowing really well the time that was required for me to do the work.

It was not uncommon for families to be described as under stress. Lola described how "My marriage just about disappeared. My marriage became very, very fragile, and there was a time that I thought I was going to collapse myself". She described this as resulting from: "the loneliness of the PhD exercise". She said that "one of the reasons that my marriage became at risk was the depth that I was getting into my topic – my partner couldn't quite keep up with it, and actually wasn't interested enough to keep up with it". One of the mothers explained that "I wasn't there... I was physically there, but my brain wasn't. I'd wander out and talk to people, talk to kids, kids were sick of it." This issue of being physically present, but mentally and emotionally 'elsewhere,' was not uncommon, and, as Zelda explained "It leads to a lack of understanding. You're in another head-space". Her thesis "was perceived by my ex- husband as being 'a bit of a hobby', whereas I took it very seriously indeed. And so we started having clashes about use of time and where I should be".

A few of the women described husbands as actively attempting to sabotage their wives' studies. For example, one woman's husband

didn't want a partner who was doing a doctorate – that was just totally unacceptable to him... He refused ever to do any child-care if I was working on my doctorate or to support me to work on my doctorate. So I got a half time job and had to bring somebody into the house to do the child-care while he was at home.

Two of the other women described being forced to choose between the thesis and the husband. Sophie, for example, had young children, including a small baby:

I had all the struggles of child-care. I had a husband who was unemployed but unwilling to do very much about anything and, until the very last year of my PhD, I was supporting the family. During that last year he finally got a job that was able to support us. It was very interesting. He was finally earning money and he became a different person. I found I just simply couldn't maintain being married to him because he expected me then to be a good housewife because I wasn't earning money. It was very strange. I was in the middle of trying to finish my PhD, and so finally said, "This is just crap!" and we separated.

Similarly, Leslie explained that, when she became a student:

My husband didn't know at all what to make of this and, to cut a long story short, two things happened. The first one was I knew I'd found my future. I fell absolutely in love with [university]. I used to touch the stones of the university and say, "Wow, this is fantastic! I can't believe I'm here!" I felt so lucky and loved the learning so much. I was just invigorated by it and I made lots of friends really quickly. And the second thing is that my husband fell out of love with it and basically he said, "You have to make a choice," and I made it like that. No second thoughts. I fell totally out of love with him, as cold as a bloody stone. Then I had a bad feeling about him. I just simply did not want to spend any more of my life with him.

Around 20 per cent of those interviewed had experienced the break-up of a marriage or other long-term primary relationship during the thesis research and writing process. For example, Charles "had a wife who complained that she never saw me and at the end of the process left because she said it wouldn't make any difference to me". However, break-ups during the thesis were not always seen in terms of 'cause and effect', as Lorraine explained:

My marriage broke up. And it's never to know whether or not the reason I started all this [the PhD] is because things weren't that great at home or that I wasn't maybe that challenged at home in terms of thinking. I wouldn't like to say if either one was the cause of it. It might have been the relationship caused the PhD rather than that causing the breakdown of the relationship I suspect.

For Godfrey, the marriage break-up

wasn't connected as much in that I was married to the thesis at all. But it was connected as much as I was under a lot of stress and how the relationship nurturing was put under pressure. I was, I guess, not available as much to give in the relationship. But it also heightened the feeling of wanting things in the relationship.

One of the divorced women still "had big questions about how much it [the thesis] had had to do with muddling up the family life. You know – there's a whole lot of guilt things centred around – there's always issues anyway, there's no balancing families and children and money and all that kind of thing". However, despite the

trauma of a break-up, some of the divorcees who did not have dependent children, or who now had days or weeks apart from their children, found that living alone created space for work. One woman described the break-up of her "main partnership" as helping her "in a perverse sort of way". Although it was a "personally devastating time" for her, in compensation she "just sunk myself into my work to help deal with it. So I became incredibly productive".

BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE

These stories of domestic life illustrate how the production of a thesis is more than an 'intellectual' process. Thesis work weaves its way through the most private places and intimate spaces of 'private' or domestic life. As Harvey argued, "space may be forgotten as an analytical category open to questioning, but it is omnipresent as an unquestioned category in everything we do" (1996, p. 267). ... I check my watch. It's 6.00am – I've been editing this paper for an hour. Early mornings have always been my optimum time for clarity of thought. My body is made that way. Sunrise – time for my morning walk through city streets. To clear the head, stretch the body – think about the next paper I have to write... My aching shoulders zoom into consciousness ...

Feminist writers have reinstated 'the body' in social theorising. The process of scholarship involves what Foucault called struggles "between oneself and oneself" (Foucault, 1985, p. 66). Such struggles have often been depicted as requiring ascendancy of mind over body. For example, Kris Kellor wrote of "the splitting I felt taking place between my mind and body" during her doctoral work "and my belief that spirituality and non-cognitive ways of knowing were taboo in the academy" (1999, p. 29). She explained how her doctoral experience had helped her to "appreciate ways in which dominant educational discourses and practices work to keep minds and bodies disassociated in the processes involved in the construction of theory" (Kellor, 1999, p. 40).

Yet accounts of bodily aches and pains, tears, and illnesses punctuated the interviewees' stories about their doctoral writing processes: "I remember one Saturday actually being sick 'cause I didn't know what to do with the data I had in front of me. I got up and vomited everywhere".

Jean used 'bodily pleasures' to reward herself for making progress. These rewards included:

Buying myself stuff. Going out with friends to the movies. Sometimes I'd say, 'Right! If I've done two hours work I'll go down to the local cafe and have my favourite coffee and my favourite piece of food.' I'd reward myself sometimes with food, or I would go to the gym. I always had something that sort of patted me on the back for doing some stuff.

In the process of 'crafting the self as scholar', "There is the care of the body to consider, health regimens, physical exercises without over-exertion, the carefully measured satisfaction of needs" (Foucault, 1985, p. 51). Interviewees' daily routines often included physical exercise and this afforded 'thinking space'. Emma, a competitive athlete, described how "usually in the morning I'd wake up about 6.00am or so and do a warm-up run for the day. I'd train properly later that evening. I'd do a couple of hours just before dinner. I'd go and have dinner and then do a little bit more thinking work". And Margaret described how she "had a lot of thinking time when I was out walking in the early morning".

Students and writers are inventive in their making of time and mappings of space, I muse as I step out into the grey morning air. We make literal and metaphorical 'rooms of our own'. The first autumn leaves rustle under my Reeboks. I shall plan my next paper along the banks of the wide Waikato. As I stride down Kitchener Street, knots in my computer-cramped shoulders begin to loosen ...

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