



**Gender and Technology:
Women's experiences in an undergraduate
nursing program**

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Declaration of Originality

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Judith Manning

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to determine how women felt about and learnt to use technological devices in an undergraduate nursing program. The way masculinity and femininity were understood and practised within families and the portrayal of conventional gender roles of women and men by the media are examined to determine social constructions which have influenced the women's perceptions of technology. Further, the study explored women's experiences when learning to acquire and apply knowledge of technological devices in order to identify factors which facilitated, influenced or inhibited that learning. In addition, women's perceptions of nursing, and the value of technological device use in nursing care were examined. The research focusses on the impact that each of these interrelated concepts have on women's learning.

Eight women from a cohort of graduating students from a South Australian School of Nursing, situated within a large multi-campus Faculty of Nursing were interviewed. Selection in the research was determined by a random sampling technique. A qualitative Feminist Interviewing Technique with Constant Comparative Analysis of the data was utilised to determine the women's perceptions.

The women's perceptions of technology were influenced by their views of femininity and masculinity and affected their learning to use technological devices in the home. However, the women's ability and confidence in using technological devices in an undergraduate program was facilitated by the safe and supportive environment created within the nursing skills laboratory. Discovery or experimental learning in small groups with teachers acting as facilitators enhanced student's feelings of confidence and learning. Insufficient time to practice in the laboratory hindered students' learning. All women were nervous when first incorporating technological device use into the clinical nursing area and focussed on the device rather than the client because as student nurses their prime concern is to ensure client safety. The women believed that the more often they used technological devices in client care the more confident they became. And the women believed they became more client than device focused. The women identified the essential element of nursing as the nurse and the ability to provide skilled nursing care that would holistically meet the needs of the clients. Nursing care was seen as providing both physical and emotional care to clients.

The contemporary issues which affect the way in which women perceive technology and learn to use technological devices were identified through using a feminist perspective.. Strategies to facilitate women's learning were also determined and should be considered when planning curriculum and teaching strategies for undergraduate nursing programs.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Originality

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Chapter 1	Introduction	1
Chapter 2	The Literature	5
	Gender in general education literature 1960-1980	5
	Literature overview: general and nursing education 1980-1996	6
	Challenging the status quo	7
	Concepts of technology	9
	Technological devices	9
	Gendered technology	11
	Need for study	13
Chapter 3	Methodology	14
	Feminist influences	15
	My approach to the study	17
	Ethical parameter	18
	Recruitment	19
	Refocusing the study	20
	Developing the research tools	20
	Listening to the women's experiences	21
	Determining a feminist perspective from the stories	22
Chapter 4	Introducing the Women	24
	Kelly	24
	Rae	26
	Chin	27
	Jane	28
	Bev	30
	Leonie	32
	Julie	33
	Yu	34
	The Interviewee's	36
Chapter 5	Social Construction of Gender and Technology	37
	Family influences	37
	The influence of the media	40
	Influences of Secondary Schooling	41
	Notions of Technology	41

Chapter 6	The Women's Learning Experience	45
	How the women learnt	45
	Cognitive difference	47
	Stressors and how the women felt	49
	Teaching methods	51
	Creating the learning environment	53
	Empowerment	55
Chapter 7	Nursing and Technology	57
	The women's perceptions of nursing	57
	Technological device use in nursing care	59
	Effects of the socially constructed conventional role of the nurse on student nurses	62
Chapter 8	The Way Forward	65
	Implications from social constructions of gendering	65
	Importance of learning environment	66
	Empowerment through education	67
	Further study areas	69
	Limitations	70
Chapter 9	Conclusion	71
	Bibliography	73
	Appendices	92