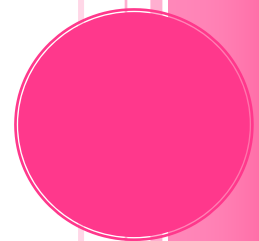


[SINGLE MOTHERS AND LIFE EXPERIENCES]

Summary of Results

Dr Bronwyn Harman



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This study is part of a five year research program that examines the life experiences of parents. This stage examined single mothers in Australia. Data was collected in 2011/2012.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were recruited via online forums (such as bubhub.com.au and singlemum.com.au), social media (Twitter and Facebook), personal contacts, and snowballing. They were drawn from all states and territories Australia wide. A total of 67 women participated in this study.

THE SURVEY

Participants were invited to complete an online survey of open-ended questions designed to allow them to share their stories and lived experiences as parents. This enabled parents to tell the story in the way they wanted it told.

RESULTS

Two major themes emerged from the data.

Stigma: The participants felt stigmatised by society, particularly if they were younger single mothers. The means by which they became single mothers was not relevant. Widowed women, for example, became single mothers “the okay way”, but were still viewed negatively by society. Single mothers said partnered mothers were threatened by single mothers, viewing them as potential “husband stealers”.

Every day events: The mothers in this study found every day events difficult. They had nobody to share the burdens of illness or tiredness, or the triumphs of success. They spoke of physical and emotional loneliness. Many of the participants regretted the lack of a constant positive male role model.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Despite the negatives, most women were pleased that they had autonomous decision making in regards to their child’s upbringing.

QUERIES

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