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Perception of Mothers Towards their Children
Pursuing Careers Related to the Home and/or
Hospitality

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INTRODUCTION

This is an exploratory pilot study narrating the perception of mothers towards the career choices of their children, focusing on hospitality generally and more specifically their perception of a possible career of the home. Research or the lack of it, seems to indicate that the work of the home is not perceived as a profession therefore hospitality has been used as a bridge in this exploratory study to examine perceptions of a profession related to the home.

The concepts of profession and career will be explored to elicit their meaning in relation to both hospitality work and the work of the home. Work associated with the home is often not perceived as a career in Western or developed countries. This can be due to economic development, scarcity of labour and tasks of the home shared within families. Hospitality careers can also be perceived as having less value and prestige than other careers, at least in Western societies. Research has found that parents can have a significant influence on the career choice of their children. but this has been under researched (Haven-Tang & Botterill, 2005). This research will firstly explore mothers of girls aged between 5 and 16 on how they personally view the work of the home, their values and the importance they give to the home. Participants are also asked to describe what the concepts of 'profession' or 'career' meant to them, their aspirations for the careers of their children and more specifically careers in hospitality and the home. The research is focusing on mothers given the themes being explored are associated with the home and it is seeking to elicit their own perceptions of home to contextualize their views of professions/careers for their children in hospitality and/or the home.

This paper will commence with a review of the literature, defining concepts such as home, profession, career that are central to this research investigation. The literature review section then highlights the research gaps. The next section is the research methodology section followed by the findings and the discussion and conclusion sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no precise definition of career (Barron, Maxwell, Broadbridge, & Ogden, 2007). Career for this paper will be defined as a sequence of paid and non-paid positions and activities (Arnold, 1997; Baruch, 2004) that are meaningful (Tymon & Stumpf, 2003) and that span the course of a person's life (Robbins, Bergman, Stagg, & Coulter, 2006). More recently the nature of career is changing (Ayres, 2006). More specific descriptors are appearing for the term career such as: protean careers by which not only an individual's work but also their personal circumstances that influence their career; and boundaryless careers where the responsibility for education, training and career planning rests with the individual rather than with an organization (Hall, 2002). Profession has been traditionally associated with a body of members with specific education and training, that has a code of conduct enforced by a governance structure which provides an important service to the community (Larson, 1977). Later profession was used to describe competent expertise (Mautz, 1988) however "contemporary colloquial usage of the term implies that those educated to become professionals are recipients of training that covers appropriate behaviour, as well as the delivery of quality services" (Smith & Westerbeek, 2004, p. 39). Once quality comes into professionalism values become important to the profession (Warrior, 2002). The term profession has been used in the context of hospitality but it was assumed rather than clearly defined (Chuang, Goh, Stout, & Dellmann-Jenkin, 2007; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Ottenbacher, Harrington, & Parsa, 2009).

"Parents are powerful influencers.....as influencers they shape attitudes towards careers by conveying beliefs and values" (Haven-Tang & Botterill, 2005, p. 168). Beliefs reflect knowledge individuals possess about the world, values relate to what a person sees as good, valuable and sought-after (Gross, 1996). Super(1957) claims that parental socio-economic background is one of the determinants of career patterns and that children who identify with their parents are more likely to choose occupations that their parents value. This research is now over fifty years old and for many developed countries social structures have changed, chiefly driven by economic development, since this research was undertaken. However more recent research does support the fact that career decision making is situation related and cannot be divorced from culture, life histories and family background (Hodkinson, 1995) and attitudes towards work and careers have been found to be influenced by family interaction (Lankard, 1995). Parental influences on career choice stem from significant contextual determinants that impact on career interests, goals, actions and accomplishments (Lent & Brown, 1996). Middleton and Loughead (1993) categorize parental involvement in their children's career choice into: positive, negative and non-involvement. They found that children who experience negative involvement from their parents pursue careers selected by their parents so they do not upset them, rather than select careers they personally desire. A number of studies have found that parents do influence career choice and career development (Ferreira, Santos, Fonesca, & Haase, 2006; Ferry, Fouad, & Smith, 2000; Gibson, Griepentrog, & Marsh, 2006; Whiston & Keller, 2004; Young, Friesen, & Dillabough, 1991)

The link between a career in hospitality and the home has been highlighted by Lashley (2008) "often those destined for careers in hospitality first learn the rules and obligations of hosting and hospitableness in the home" (p, 69). The hospitality research literature has also identified a clear link between the home and not only hospitality career choice but also hospitality career success (cited in Lashley, 2008: Lashley, 1985; O'Mahony, 2003). Haven-Tang & Botterill (2005) conclude that the decision to select a tourism and hospitality career begins in the home.

A hospitality career has a confusing complex image (Riley, Ladkin, & Szivas, 2002). On the one hand it is portrayed as glamorous and on the other, as being associated with basic skills, low status and poor image (Riley, et al., 2002). Careers in hospitality appear to be negatively perceived by those outside the sector (Choy, 1995; Getz, 1994) and this may have an impact on parents: "the hospitality sector has not got the reputation it deserves, parents do not see it as a worthwhile career, but only as a stopgap between careers" (Gildea, 2008, p. 5). The image of the sector is improving "but many parents feel it offers their children poor pay and long hours" (Perry, 2001, p. 3). Wong and Liu's (2010) study of Chinese parents found that parental support of the tourism and hospitality sector and parental barriers to career choice were important career choice predictors for students selecting a hospitality career.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research will explore the view of mothers' towards work in the home, professions/careers, their aspirations regarding the possible careers of their children and more specifically careers in hospitality and the home. The study sought to focus on women who had girls aged between 5 and 16 years of age as the authors did not want to digress with discussions of gender roles related to work in the home and more specifically choosing the work in the home as a professional career. Within these parameters on the basis of snowballing and convenience sampling twenty-five women were interviewed between October and December 2010. The former involved the researchers initially identifying one or two individuals from the above population. Interviewees were then asked to identify other participants who are in turn used participants until the desired number was reached (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Robson, 1993; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008; Siverman & Marvasti, 2008). Interviews ranged from 15 minutes to more than 1 hour, most interviews taking approximately 30 minutes. Women interviewed came from a range of socio- economic backgrounds

living in the metropolitan area of Sydney Australia. Approximately fifty percent were engaged in paid part-time or full-time work outside the home, while others were occupied with unpaid full-time work in their own homes with most in this group taking on volunteer work outside the home.

Structured interviews were undertaken by five different people three being mothers with children themselves working full time in the home. Interview questions were:

What does the home mean to you?

What is your profession (Is this a hard question to answer as mother working at home)?

Do you work outside the home on a paid or volunteer basis? If paid, what type of work and how many hours per week? If you volunteer what type of work do you do and how many hours a week?

What do you understand by the term profession?

What do you understand by the term career?

What do you want for your children in terms of profession and career?

What do you understand by 'hospitality' and/or how would you describe hospitality work?

How do you perceive hospitality as a career?

What would be your attitude if one of your children, who could choose any career (such as teaching, medicine, business, nursing etc.) chose to do hospitality?

How do you perceive the care of the home as a career?

Do you see a career of care of the home for women without children?

What would be your attitude if one of your children, who could choose any career (such as teaching, medicine, business, nursing etc.) chose the career of work in the home?

Do you think women need to be prepared for their role in the home? If so how?

The interview style was very dependent on the interviewers with some delving deeper into the answers provided. Training of the interviewers was not homogeneous, one focused more on preparing women for the home, for another a career in the home was for a housewife only.

Each interview was recorded and transcribed to ensure the accuracy of data. Each author, separately, used content analysis and summation of the transcripts to identify categories that integrate and generalise major themes from the data. The authors came together to compare and to confirm the common themes emerging from the data. An inductive approach to the data analysis was used, whereby a set of categories grounded in the data were determined so that key themes emerged are presented using the respondents own words

STUDY FINDINGS

PARTICPANTS OWN PERSONAL CONCEPT OF THE HOME

All the participants had a positive concept of the home. The data highlights diverse nuances of what the home means to them but the vast majority see it as a haven, a safe place 'where the family is' (Int 20). Where one can feel secure, comfortable and at peace, 'it is like an oasis in a busy world' (Int 2). It is a where one 'can relax and be yourself and be with people' (Int.1); a place one can socialize and 'share our trials and our joys' (Int 4); 'where everyone comes together and talks about things during the day, it's a bit of a debriefing and relaxation thing.'(Int 9). It was also a place where one feels loved and 'accepted for whatever they are' (Int 16).

The concept of the home being a place of nurturing or nourishment came up: the home being a place 'where they learn to become a better human person. Home is where they get their love to go out to meet the challenges of the day and society.'(Int 17) 'It is the environment where you are able to foster that unconditional love — the help towards each other' (Int 15). 'Where you learn and prepare for adulthood' (Int 20). Only one of the interviews delved deeper in simple practical terms how this nurturing is encouraged or drawn out:

'It's a place that has a warm atmosphere in which the family can grow and their needs can be taken care of, for example, well prepared meals and laundry, a clean and beautiful home. All these things help the individuals in their personal growth and to be settled in their study or work, to be able to manage aspects of their study and work well. This is accomplished if they have a home that is well cared for and that they are taken care of' (Int 25).

The home refers to where the family is and most participants reflected on the role they live out as mothers in nurturing and helping the family to grow. Though some of the concepts of a safe haven, a comfortable place where one can relax and be oneself could relate to any home.

THE CONCEPTS OF 'PROFESSION' AND 'CAREER'

Definitions: A number of participants were confused with the differences between 'profession' and 'career' perceiving these concepts to be overlapping. However most participants emphasized that profession was something that you are trained or educated in which brings with it some type of skill or qualification, 'things where you have some sort of training and a qualification' (Int 1) 'something where you want to further enhance your own skills' (Int 5) 'a job that has some status' (Int 1). As opposed to a career which is related more to time, 'a track you take' (int 2), 'the choice that you followed through in life' (Int3). 'A plan that someone has for their future that they will work for and get paid for' (Int 6).

Normally a profession would have some status or pay related to it. Whilst a career may be paid work or could be voluntary. 'There is more passion and more interest, personal interest involved in a career' (Int 1). 'You gain experience and you get better and better at it' (Int 14). But 'you can change careers' (Int 4). 'Career is a work choice' (Int 16) thus there is a 'lot of self-esteem and commitment' (Int 17).

Another interviewee raised the idea of identity – career being 'how you identify yourself and what you do' (Int 7).

Participants expression of their own professions/careers: Many of those interviewed worked in the home and some had difficulty explaining at first what their actual profession was.

'Because it's like trying to find who I am amongst all of that, I mean ... being a mother and a full time kind of home keeper is the main kind of job that I do but I guess it is not very recognised as being important — I mean it is amongst my friends, amongst those people who

do it as well but in ... academia or somewhere else, it is like oh is that all you do, like you know is that all... So ...it is a hard question. I guess you don't want to find your identity in what you do but... it is just the way of the world that – you know it is like what you do is. It's a measurement of yourself' (Int 2).

Other participants had no problem in stating the value of their work in the home as a profession including one who described her profession jokingly as 'a domestic goddess' (Int 9).

Society's perception of the profession/career in the home: Many of the participants were stay at home mums or home makers and expressed that others do not recognize being a home maker as a profession. 'They don't consider it as proper work' (Int 3) but take it for granted. Some claimed that the work of the home is not seen as a profession because you don't study for it, 'it's not something you would go to university or even TAFE [vocational training in Australia] for' (Int 9) others stated that society perceives that one needed to work outside of the home to have a profession. Others stated that they get asked questions from friends and family such as: 'why I am not working and why I haven't got a proper job and why I would choose to give up a really good career to stay at home with children' (Int 22) and some said they can find it difficult to say they are 'just caring for the home' (Int 22). Many were very committed to their role in the home and see it as 'very important' (Int 24) and provided them with 'great fulfillment' (Int 25).

CAREER WANTED FOR CHILDREN

The participants unanimously wanted the career for their children to be first and foremost something that would make them happy, being a job that they would enjoy whatever it may be. It would need to be something that would be 'personally fulfilling' (Int 1). They would encourage their children 'to go with what your real love is' (Int 5) something they would excel in, 'to be the best person they can be' (Int 15). One participant compared a child's profession to their 'identity' (Int 8). A few participants saw the need for a career that will enable their children to 'support themselves and their families' (Int 11) to provide them remuneration but at the same time they did not want them to 'do something just for the pay and not because they are enjoying it' (Int 19).

Another recurring theme that was elicited from the data related to the type of career they wanted for their children was they hoped they would be making a contribution towards society or the community, a career where they can 'make a difference in their life for themselves and for others' (Int 23). 'I want them to contribute to society, not just to line their own pockets, but to do things that would be worthwhile for society and groups in society who are less fortunate than them' (Int 23). The interviewees saw this as the real way in which their children would be happier and more fulfilled in their chosen career.

Hospitality as a profession/career

Description: The majority viewed hospitality as a great profession 'giving and serving people ... it's a spirit of service' (Int 3), 'making people comfortable' (Int 5).

'I understand it as we do that in our home, where we serve and not just necessarily physically but more so spiritually, I guess it is giving yourself to someone else and providing a warm nurturing environment.' (Int 7)

A few described this profession in terms of 'being extremely hard work...quite long hours and not being a particularly family friendly career ...it runs the gamut from being a menial job to being an intensely intellectual, highly demanding' job' (Int 4). 'A thankless job.' (Int 18), one described it as 'a humble sort of profession' (Int 7).

As a Profession/Career?: Some saw it as something interim, a part-time job while one is studying etc. That working in the hospitality sector is a good opportunity to experience because the skills learnt can be used in diverse career paths and in the home setting. Others saw it as an important career, one of 'giving yourself, not just physically, but as a person and your talents and yourself (Int 7). That is a 'wonderful industry for those that are able to do it...not for the faint hearted. You would really have to have a passion to do it' (Int 8). It is a career with many options or areas that one could work in with some benefits such as travel.

'I think that there is a general perception in society that hospitality is not a great career as you end up cleaning up after people and doing things ...not considered to be very prestigious. I think hospitality in itself is a beautiful career, a great career as whatever you are doing is for someone else. All your energies are geared towards the benefit of others. Also it requires a lot of qualities, you need to be cheerful, despite the fact that you are feeling grumpy, you can't be grumpy you have to think outside yourself. You have got to be willing to put feelings and needs aside ... to be able to relate to other people to be able to be empathetic to think what does this person need what do I need to do how do I need to help this person. And it also requires humility it's not so much what I can get for myself but how I can help others' (Int 14).

It is a career helping to replicate a home away from home for others. Words used to describe this career include: A very honourable, necessary and viable profession. 'You are participating in the process of making other people happy and making other people function well' (Int 15). 'You are the power behind the throne so to speak' (Int 15). 'I think it is very important as it takes care of people's wellbeing, people who are well looked after can contribute better to society. So it is service to people, it is a very important part of society' (Int 25).

As a Career for my children: The study highlighted a variety of responses to this question. The majority were quite supportive of their children pursuing a career in hospitality provided that this was really what their children wanted to do. One thought it would be 'a great backstop if they couldn't choose something... because you can use it in all avenues' (Int 5); others stated that this career taught you skills that are applicable in so many environments including the home. One stated they would be 'a bit disappointed' (Int 6), a number commented that they would be concerned about the hours of work, 'they are not necessarily family friendly hours' (Int 1). One stated that she would accept this career for her child if it was 'an informed choice' (Int 14). A number commented that the personal qualities or suitability of the children's character and personality would need to be taken into account. If the mother thought the child did not have the right qualities for this type of work they would not encourage them. Plus the child would need to know 'exactly what they were getting into and the pluses and minuses of it '(Int 22). 'Because it is such long hours you get weird and wonderful people, maybe that may clash a little bit with your own values. So you've just got to be prepared to know that you are going to meet a lot of diverse people' (Int 23).

'I think it is a very noble thing to do. A person in that profession has to be always thinking of others. It is very order oriented and it's really giving oneself for others because those people think how they can make other people happy and how they can make other people enjoy while they are at your service. If you are running a restaurant one would always have to see how they can make their enterprise more appealing than competitors. So it's always thinking of how they can service others better. It is a very competitive profession, but at the same time if that is what they like I think it is a very good profession – very noble because it is service oriented' (Int 16).

For the participants: Many of the interviewees were stay at home mums and definitely saw the work of the home as a career and indeed their own current career and were very happy and fulfilled with this career, more specifically seeing it as looking after their own children and husband. Some went further to emphasise that it is 'a very important career... everything starts there' (Int 7).

'If someone chooses to stay at home forever and look after the home and look after their family that's fabulous because it's been proven that the stronger the home life the more sound of an adult your children grow up to be. Often those people who do stay at home and have a calm home life and a very warm and welcoming home are envied by a lot of people' (Int 9).

A few participants mentioned the importance of the love that needs to be put into this career, which can make all the difference. One interviewee raised an issue that at times it can be very frustrating with never ending work. But also mentioned that

'if you love it enough and if you have the support around you to make it that but I think if you're on your own and trying to do it on your own then, I don't know, maybe you need to... reach out more to other women who do it full time and get more support from them' (Int 2).

It was seen as challenging at times; 'you are your own boss which brings with it pros and cons – greater flexibility but also greater need to be careful because you can be more relaxed than in a paid work position with a boss over you' (Int 3). Or 'perhaps because we don't perceive it as a career, being a stay at home mum, we don't see any glorification or we are not being rated so we could get lax and let go' (Int 1).

Society's perspective: Most thought that society undervalued the work of the home.

'It's very under appreciated. If you say to somebody I look after the home. It is sort of like a conversation killer. When I am asked what do you do, I reply I am a stay at home mother. What do you do all day is the next question they ask you. Almost as if you are at home you are not doing anything. Whilst at home it can be very busy if you apply yourself ...but I think the idea of being in the home and calling it a career would be quite how do you say not revolutionary but challenging our current culture. There is a push towards getting women back to work and a push towards developing your professional life outside the home and things like that. I think it is underrated it is undervalued it needs to come back into focus' (Int 14).

Many commented that at times they have had to face a lot of 'negativity' because they chose to care for the home. One interviewee emphasised how important it is for society to give support to young mothers because

'whatever negativity is directed towards them may then flow on into the home and ...affect their children. It is very important to support young mothers so they can actually build a home that is peaceful and welcoming and beautiful and certainly it provides opportunities for mothers to get involved and meet other mothers who also work in the home and give them support and be involved in their community... I think mothers at home are a wonderful resource and they can be mobilized to provide a lot of support in their local community' (Int 14).

Some noted that the work in the home is perhaps less valued because there is no benchmark, you are not accountable to anyone which is different to most other jobs where if you don't perform well

you pay the consequences. It may now be more valued because 'more and more people employ people to do their housework' (Int 1) and actually pay them.

For their children: the interviewees overwhelmingly would be happy for their children to stay at home if they were able to especially if they had young children and if financially they were able to do this. 'If it is what he or she is good at and wants to do it and loves being in it and is creative in it, I think.. why not, go ahead... I'm all for it' (int 17). That by doing so you are 'supporting the economy' (Int 3) and 'building the future...the formation of the future generation and it is very important' (Int 20). 'As long as they were going to be productive in the home and things like laziness doesn't overtake them' (Int 5).

'if it was my daughter I would prefer her to be home with the children because why else do you have children, for someone else to look after? I don't understand that, I know that I am fortunate that I don't have to work so I understand that some women do have to, so I don't judge but if they have a choice they should be home with their children' (Int 6).

But at the same time there was some concern amongst a few participants to make sure that they were not isolated 'they need to be able to mix outside of the home, so they can be interesting people themselves. They need to study and learn from others' (Int 23).

A number raised the concern of wanting their children to have 'a bit of life first – life experiences- life outside the home...because...whatever experiences you have in the world will help you within your domestic situation' (Int 4). 'I think it is good to have something under your belt before you kind of embark on family and building a home...it makes you a fuller person...to have something else as well' (Int 2).

Care of the home as career for women without children: Many of the interviewees found this a rather interesting and challenging question. Most seemed to struggle with the concept of care of the home as a career if there was no children in the family 'as how much more could they do' (Int 2). Others saw it as an extension of the work of service and hospitality

'even without children you have to care for others – maybe a very important person will not have children who is running a country, who is running a big corporation – so the importance of that home so that you are actually extending that service to other people is already in itself a crucial role, because even if you don't have children, if you are looking after the care of the home for a CEO of a big company you are actually already extending that service to the employees of that company through you're looking after the head of that company' (Int 15).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper has highlighted the value mothers place on the work in the home but what they perceived as a lack of corresponding value placed on the work of the home from society. This would be an interesting area for further research to develop societies perspective on work in the home. Is it true that we undervalue it because it is normally unpaid? Is it because it has been seen as 'women's work' therefore not as important? Is it because society only values traditional 'male' roles/work? Is it that many people cannot really describe the beneficial effects of a stay at home mums in looking after the children and the home? Is the concept of work in the home too nebulous or vague? Is it because there is little professional training in this area? On the other hand hospitality students tend not to want to work in areas such as housekeeping in Hotels as they see it really as just cleaning up after people who at times do leave a mess. Is this due to lack of understanding of the dignity of work

of the care of the home where many times mothers clean up after the family or struggle to teach the family to clean up after themselves? Some of the participants were concerned about the long hours and hard work in the hospitality profession but it is interesting to note that this is the norm for most women working in the home; they work 24/7 and never seem to get away from it.

A significant finding was that all the participants wanted their children to be happy in their chosen career, would support them in whatever they wanted to do, or what they would enjoy doing. Including having a profession or career which the child showed some passion for and would achieve some fulfillment and in addition have the opportunity to contribute to society. These findings contradict Wong and Liu (2010) Chinese study that a significant influence and inhibitor of hospitality as a career choice is parental concerns about prestige. This result may be due to the egalitarian nature of Australian society and also of the real capacity for all Australians to go to University and have a variety of professional careers if they want to. Since the country gives a lot of moral and financial support to help all young people get a good education. The so called 'Lucky country' name comes from this idea. For example there is a lot of financial support and scholarships available for people from low socio-economic backgrounds to get into and continue at University provided they have the stamina to stay there. Some of these findings may be Australian context specific. Further research could be replicating this study in other developed countries.

The interviewees linked profession to some type of training, education &/or skills acquisition whilst career was seen as a longer term thing. This is consistent with the research. Profession would normally involve remuneration whilst career may not always. One could choose to do volunteering as part of their career. This view may have impacted on some of the stay at home mothers having some difficulty in viewing the work of the home as a profession and indeed the wide view that society's perception of the work of the home was undervalued. However, although the interviewees considered that society in general undervalued the work of the home they were consistent in seeing a great value in it themselves. Most of the women were really convinced of the very important role they play in society by caring for their homes and families and would encourage their daughters to do the same if they were able to.

In the study the care of the home was seen more in the perspective of a home with a husband and children. The idea of dedicating oneself to a career in the home when there are no children was normally a foreign concept. The interviewees tended to need a purpose behind the care of the home such as looking after the elderly.

The understanding of hospitality was very much imbued with service - a career involving serving the needs of others in a professional context. At the same time a number were realistic of the demands involved in this profession of shift work and the demands associated with caring for others. However, one interviewee went deeper into the aspects of care of the person and the home away from home aspects of the profession/career of hospitality, which is based on one's own positive experience in the home.

If the care in a hotel or whatever hospitality establishment is well done it can also have an impact in the contribution that a person can make in society. For example, if someone has a busy schedule with lots of important stressful meetings but comes 'home' to the hotel to relax, to have a nice meal, well served and can have a good nights sleep in a comfortable room with all the things they need it will make a difference to their performance the next day in their further meetings. Also, we know too that we all need a good rest, a good holiday to refresh our strengths and then to be able to come back to work and work hard and with focus. Therefore, good resorts can aid in family holidays and proper rest as well. Hospitality was seen as a profession of value of serving others and making them more comfortable. Whilst care of the home definitely had a more nurturing role as well, helping the

person at home to grow so later on they can give back to society. In a way this is a much greater and more valuable role and contributor to society than 'mere hospitality' could ever be.

A limitation of the research was that they were not asked about the issue of society's perception of the work of the home – some interesting perceptions did arise indirectly in the data. Some future areas of research can be the perceptions of a profession/career of the care of the home by society and the work of the home and identity since the data highlighted how one's profession and career is linked to identity.

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