

# **Paediatric nurses' and parents' perceptions of busyness in paediatric acute care: an ethnography**

**by Melinda Simpson-Collins**

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
the degree of

**Master of Nursing (Research)**

under the supervision of Professor Margaret Fry and Dr  
Suzanne Sheppard-Law

University of Technology Sydney  
Faculty of Health

July 2021

# CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

## CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Melinda Simpson-Collins declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Nursing (Research), in the Faculty of Health, School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

Signature:

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the diverse number of people that supported me along the way. The ethnography is dedicated to my family, paediatric nurses and families that require hospitalised care. This study highlights the incredible work that these paediatric nurses do every day.

During the writing of this thesis, Arie (our second child) was born, Noah (first born) started school, we moved from Sydney to Newcastle which meant that my Paediatric Clinical Nurse Consultant role came to an end and the COVID-19 pandemic was widespread across Australia. I am truly grateful to my husband Scott and two children Noah and Arie who endured this journey with me over the past five years, this would not have been possible, even started or finished without them as my biggest supporters. My mother Christine also played a significant role, caring for Noah and Arie on a regular basis so I could write.

Deepest thanks to my supervisors Professor Margaret Fry and Dr Suzanne Sheppard-Law who coached me along when I wanted to give up, believed in me when at times I did not and helped me see the value in this study and my own strengths as a writer and researcher. I am grateful for their faith in this ethnography, which was at times challenging due to the uniqueness of the study design.

Many thanks to the participants in this study, both paediatric nurses and parents who generously gave me their time, trust and shared their stories. The staff in the paediatric inpatient unit were very welcoming and helped me feel part of the family, this made the ethnography so much richer. To Claire (Paediatric Nurse Unit Manager) who helped make it happen and in addition Emma (Paediatric Clinical Nurse Educator) and Lauren (Clinical Nurse Consultant) who all supported my research work and continuously enabled me to gather lots of rich, meaningful data in the field.

Finally, my extended family and friends who I saw less of during the making of this thesis and still encouraged me, I thank everyone of them. I must also acknowledge the scholarships awarded by the University of Technology Sydney and The Edith Cavell Trust, which alleviated some of the burden of costs associated with research work. Although I am the primary narrator, this ethnography is the product of many great minds.

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# ABSTRACT

**Background:** Busyness within modern health care has often been defined as time constraints and increased workload, leading to individualised perceptions of stress. To date, no published studies have sought to explore busyness as a construct within therapeutic relationships in a paediatric acute care setting or how cultural dimensions of paediatric nursing fosters perceptions of busyness within everyday care practices.

**Aim:** To explore a notion of busyness within the context of paediatric acute care and how this influences the therapeutic relationship between paediatric nurses and families.

**Method:** Ethnography was the research design selected for the study. Semi-structured interviews with 10 paediatric nurses and 10 parents, and 40 hours of non-participant observations were conducted. Brewer's (2000) framework for ethnographic analysis and interpretation was utilised and findings were presented as a realist tale.

**Findings:** Seven themes emerged, which detailed cultural dimensions of busyness that influenced paediatric acute care. Perceptions of busyness challenged teamwork and re-shaped therapeutic relationships between paediatric nurses and families. During perceived busyness task focused care became the dominant culture and hindered family centred care. Instead, challenges emerged that required role negotiation, balancing expectations and re-forming of collaborative partnerships. The emotional cost of busyness created a sense of personal conflict that surfaced within nurses and care activities. Similarly, parents were challenged during times of busyness, leading to feelings of frustration and powerlessness.

**Conclusion:** This ethnography has identified a culture of care that was influenced by busyness. Roles within therapeutic relationships, paediatric nurse and parental expectations and collaborative partnerships were re-shaped by busyness. The findings highlighted the importance of family centred care to paediatric nurses and gave social understandings and insights into the complexities of the paediatric nurse – parent partnerships, which assisted to define dimensions of the therapeutic relationship. Importantly, the ethnography has brought to the surface how paediatric nurses and parents negotiated and balanced their partnership to achieve a desired therapeutic relationship. This ethnography has addressed a significant research gap and provided new insights into nursing, paediatric nursing practice, education and research.



# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCYPN	Australian College of Children and Young People's Nurses
AIN	Assistant in Nursing
AWCH	Association for the Wellbeing of Children in Healthcare
CNC	Clinical Nurse Consultant
CNE	Clinical Nurse Educator
CYPN	Children and Young People's Nurse
EEN	Endorsed Enrolled Nurse
FTE	Full time equivalent
IVF	Intravenous fluids
NHS	National Health System
NTS	Nursing Teamwork Survey
NUM	Nursing Unit Manager
Obs	Observations
RN	Registered Nurse
TRN	Transitional Registered Nurse