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THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AS OCCUPATIONAL BEINGS

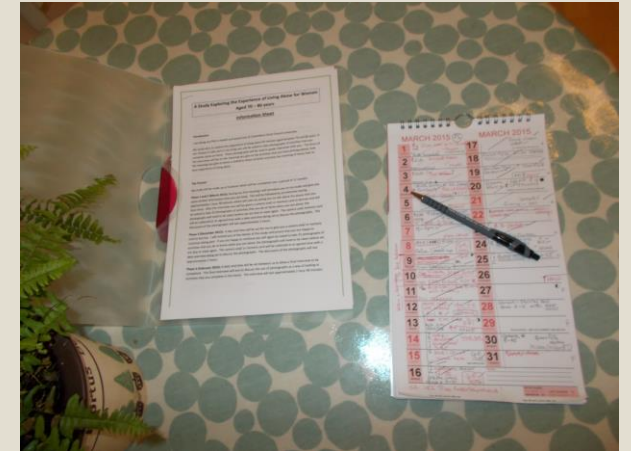
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The study

- 11 women aged 70- 80 years
- 4 phases of information collection
- 2 unstructured interviews
- 2 rounds of photo-elicitation

- 364 photographs taken and discussed
- 2276 minutes of interviews captured

- Interpretive phenomenology
- Qualitative and feminist methodology



Being an occupational being

- An inherent need to engage in personally meaningful activities (occupations) to develop and maintain their health and wellbeing (Law et al 1998).
- Freedom of choice to choose what they do is referred to as 'occupational choice' (Whiteford and Hocking 2012).
- The environment is more than the buildings and natural world that surround us; it also includes social, cultural, and political elements that are dynamic and change over time (Creek 2010).



**Prior to 2nd
World War:**

domestic
activity, caring
for current and
future
workforce

(Bradley 2013)

**Immediately
after 2nd World
War:**

Expected to
return to roles
in the home

(Purvis 2004)

1960's:

Women more
commonly
accessing
higher
education

(Turner 2006)

**During 2nd
World War:**

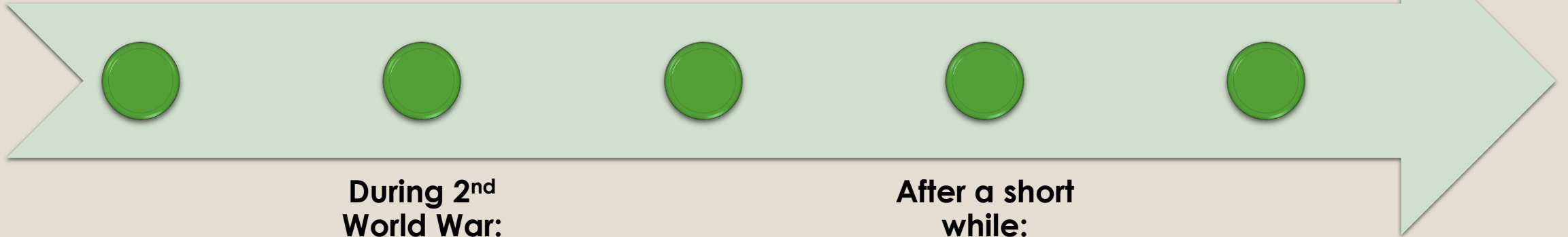
"collective
citizenship"

(Shapira 2012:72)

**After a short
while:**

Not enough
men to fulfil
jobs. Women
to do women's
jobs

(Turner 2006)



“ ... thing that annoys me is saying ‘all women like to be at home’ well they don’t, do they? That’s like saying all men want to be bus drivers isn’t it? I didn’t like being at home”

(Anne Interview 2)

Women and occupational injustice

- Occupational Therapists are concerned with enabling people to engage in the occupations that they want and need to do (Chard 2010; Creek 2010)
- Occupational *justice* as the right to engage in personally meaningful occupations (Townsend and Wilcock 2004)
- Occupational *injustice* occurs when there are factors external to the individual that act to limit the occupational choices available to them (Wicks and Whiteford 2005)
- The relationship between gender and occupational injustice for women (Wicks and Whiteford 2005)

Later life as a time of becoming

“To be honest, I think I’m most myself, I’m most happiest, um, it sounds awful to say, but since my husband’s died, and since I’ve been on my own...I’m truly me”
(Ordelia)

“You can do what you want, there is nobody to be responsible to, or that you’re looking after. Or that wants to do something else...I can do things when I want and how I want”
(Roberta)

“Like Saturday. What am I going to do today? Absolutely nothing to do. Right, can’t have that. Got meself on the 9:44 to St Pancras. First class lounge. Two cups of coffee and biscuits, free. Walked miles sort of along Regents canal and then came home”
(Lottie)

“If you're on your own, you please yourself what you're doing. You haven't got to answer to anybody...you can go to bed when you want to, watch what you want to, and eat when you want to”
(Alison)

“I can be lazy. I can have a day of not doing anything”
(Hope)

Ongoing relevance ...

- Inequalities for women continue in the workplace (Olchawski 2016)
- 'Double burden' (Slaughter 2012)
- The transitional nature of the caring role (Scholtz 2010)

Implications for practice

- Importance of the occupational narrative of individual women
- Consideration needs to be given to when and how occupational therapists intervene in the life of an older woman
- Occupational therapy and social action

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