

# Modern life-making women 'ignorant and ill-equipped' to cope with motherhood

2 March 2009

---

The growing trend to move miles away from hometowns and family for work is leaving many women feeling 'ignorant and ill-equipped' to cope with pregnancy and childbirth.

According to a University of Warwick study of motherhood, many women do not have the support and advice they need when they have a baby because they live too far from close family.

The study also suggests the modern practice of encouraging new mothers to give birth in hospital means women often have no experience of childbirth until they have their own children.

Dr Angela Davis, Leverhulme Research Fellow in the Centre for the History of Medicine, interviewed more than 90 women to discuss experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare.

She said: "Geographical mobility means that women today more often live further away from family, which means they are less likely to have relatives on hand. Also most births take place in hospital so that very few women have been present at childbirth before they have their own child."

The first part of the study focused on motherhood from 1930 to 1970 and Dr Davis said the results were surprising. She found there had always been ignorance surrounding sex education and childbirth, but for very different reasons.

She said: "The testimonies of the women interviewed for this research indicate how ignorant and ill-equipped many of them felt surrounding the issues of pregnancy, childbirth and infant care as late as the 1960s, and indeed this may still apply to women today."

Dr Davis said issues surrounding sex and childbirth in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s were considered taboo and not often discussed in the home. She

added that although women now seemed better informed about sex, there was still far too little information given to them about the development of pregnancy, childbirth and infant care.

Dr Davis said many of the women she interviewed had tried to be more open with their own children about sex education. However, she said: "They did show some level of ambivalence on the subject, and many were not sure that this increased knowledge was entirely a good thing. There was also a distinction between education about pregnancy and childbirth which they were more positive about that sex education."

The study also showed many women felt unprepared to care for their child and that motherhood was not instinctive. They agreed that they felt a natural instinct to care for their child, but had no idea how to go about it.

Source: University of Warwick

APA citation: Modern life-making women 'ignorant and ill-equipped' to cope with motherhood (2009, March 2) retrieved 17 November 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2009-03-modern-life-making-women-ill-equipped-cope.html>

*This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.*