

**AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF A MATURE AGED STUDENT
WITH A SCHIZOAFFECTIVE DISORDER: THE PLACE OF
EDUCATION IN MAINTAINING WELLNESS**

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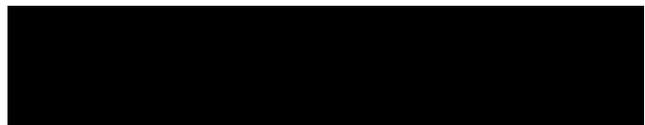
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STATEMENT BY CANDIDATE

I certify that I am the sole author and that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degree.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signed:



A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'G. Casselle'.

G. Casselle

Date: April 30th, 2011

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My husband, who looks after a mentally ill wife and manages my day-to-day existence, including technical computer support during the extended period of my enrolment in M. Ed. (Honors) degree, is acknowledged here for his role as my carer.

ABSTRACT

By discovering one's inner strengths and aptitudes, personal and academic achievements are possible which will inspire others in procuring and maintaining wellness. The methodology utilized in this thesis is autoethnography, where the candidate is the "subject" of the research. I have a diagnosis of a schizoaffective disorder. Detrimental risk factors in living from day-to-day exacerbate the impact of having this severe mental illness. Symptomology includes the schizophrenic characteristics of hallucinations and delusions, side-by-side with the affective mood swings of a bipolar psychosis. A maintenance and protective regime is necessary, consisting of psychotherapy, psychotropic medications and, in my case, regular electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). As part of this ethnographic study, readers are asked to "relive" the happenings emotionally by referring to my diaries and journals together with individual recollections of friends, family and practitioners'. My academic achievements are also explored by investigating my performance during the Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) degree attained at the University of New England between 2001 and 2006. Research questions centre on the importance that educational experiences have on a particular individual's ability to cope with a severe psychiatric disability.

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