

**Balancing Work and Motherhood:**

Looking at the Experiences of Working Mothers in Aotearoa/New  
Zealand

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates how women in Aotearoa/New Zealand balance work and family. The objective of this study is to determine what could be changed or improved to support women as mothers and workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Drawing from one-on-one semi-structured interviews with six working mothers, five Pakeha<sup>1</sup> and one Māori, I explore how Aotearoa/New Zealand mothers negotiated the demands of paid work and mothering. Also, I analyse how organisational and governmental policies and practices impacted their balance of work and family.

When I embarked on this project, my initial focus was finding how women in leadership positions juggle motherhood and work. However, when I began the interview process with the women, I realised that leadership was not the focus of our discussions. The focus was more on how they strived to balance their work and family life, regardless of their leadership experiences. I studied the women's talk through a feminist lens, and conducted a thematic narrative analysis (Riessman, 1993). I also used Giddens' (1984) theory on structure and agency as a tool to investigate how social expectations, gendered power, and one's subjective identity, work within women's lives.

My analysis of the women's talk uncovered an overwhelming sense of guilt, especially when the women felt they were not giving enough energy to their work or children. Also, the women experienced a gap between their prenatal expectations that motherhood would come naturally, versus their postnatal lived experiences. These negative postnatal experiences surfaced when the women felt they were deviating from the "rules" of oppressive mothering structures (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Also, the women commonly used flexible working arrangements to balance work and family, which had their advantages and disadvantages.

I conclude that many of the issues the women faced were due to the highly gendered structure of society, which needs to change to stop unfairly guilted women so they can balance work and family life. I outline the changes and improvements that could occur in the household, workplace, or in government policy.

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<sup>1</sup> Pakeha is a Māori word to describe the ethnicity of white New Zealanders that are primarily of European descent.

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## ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 7.09.2020 \_\_\_\_\_

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

A common challenge many women face is negotiating work life with being mothers. Often this means that women become torn between societal pressures of being a good mother versus having a successful career. It was found that 53 percent of New Zealanders think that women feel under pressure to choose between being a good mother and having a career (Gender Equal NZ, 2017). This could be a contributing factor towards why women are not equally represented in the top tier of management positions in Aotearoa/New Zealand (McGregor, et al., 2019; Grant Thornton, 2018). There is an illusion that Aotearoa/New Zealand is an egalitarian gendered state, due to factors such as having a young, progressive woman as our Prime Minister and being the first country where women won the right to vote. Unfortunately, this positive front could mean that Aotearoa/New Zealand's gender equality issues are being overlooked.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the challenges working mothers face. This body of work focuses on two gendered phenomena: the double day (Craig, 2006; Croft et al., 2014; Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2020; Firestone & Shelton, 1994; Hochschild, 1989) and mothering guilt (Henderson et al., 2015; Sutherland, 2010; Turner & Norwood, 2015). The double day highlights the gendered divide in the home. It outlines that working mothers complete their first shift of paid work, to return home and complete their unpaid second shift of domestic and childcare responsibilities (Hochschild, 1989). Another constant struggle working mothers face is mothering guilt. Due to expectations of a 'good' mother and a 'good' worker being constantly in conflict, women can experience guilt when they feel they are not giving enough time and energy to their work or to their children (Henderson, et al., 2015; Sutherland, 2010; Turner & Norwood, 2015).

Feminist scholars (Green, 2009; hooks, 2014; O'Reilly, 2016; Rich, 1986) argue that positive changes can occur when women engage in feminist types of mothering. Despite the oppressive patriarchal structure of the "institution," that ensures that women "shall remain under male control" (Rich, 1986, p. 13), O'Reilly (2016) notes that the institution can be "challenged and changed" due to its socially constructed nature (p. 16). Further, O'Reilly (2016) states that mothers can achieve this through engaging in empowered mothering and matricentric feminist practice. Additionally, hooks (2014) adds that feminism is "pro-family"

and eliminating the institution will ensure a safe, loving environment that will be beneficial to parents and children (p. 77).

A specific challenge felt by women in Aotearoa/New Zealand is the difficulty they face in attaining senior leadership positions in their chosen workforces. Aotearoa/New Zealand is one of the worst-ranked countries in the world in terms of the proportion of women in senior leadership teams (Grant Thornton, 2018). A 2018 study revealed that only 18 percent of women hold senior leadership positions, ranking Aotearoa/New Zealand as low as 33 out of a total of 35 countries from all corners of the globe (Grant Thornton, 2018). Another discouraging statistic is that between 2017 and 2018, the number of businesses in Aotearoa/New Zealand with no women in senior leadership positions increased from 37 percent to 56 percent (Grant Thornton, 2018). Additionally, the New Zealand Census of Women on Boards reported that eleven of the top 100 companies on the NZX share market had no female directors, and 36 only had one (McGregor et al., 2019). These statistics are concerning, as it suggests that there are significant barriers for women attaining leadership positions in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Initially, it was these statistics that led me to choose women leaders as the participants of my study, with the intent of my research being how the women negotiated their roles as mothers and leaders. After interviewing my participants, my research focus shifted to how women balanced work and family in general. This was due to the women's narratives revealing that the barriers they faced occurred throughout their careers, not just when they held their leadership positions.

My research is designed to contribute to the body of work that focuses on how women grapple with being working mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Only a handful of studies have looked at this geographical location (Flynn & Harris, 2014; Kahu & Morgan, 2007a; Kahu & Morgan, 2007b; Peterson et al., 2018). Arguably, more research is needed in this space to help understand the challenges women face as working mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand and suggest recommendations for change, with the ultimate goal being equal gender representation in the workforce and on the career ladder. My study attempts to contribute to this goal.



## **The social, political, and economic history of mothering in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

As my research explores how women manage their work and family requirements today, it is vital to recount how Aotearoa/New Zealand's social, political, and economic history has affected women as mothers' over time.

Before the twentieth century, families in Aotearoa/New Zealand facing financial difficulties did not receive compensation from the state. Instead, they had to rely on assistance from "relatives, friends and neighbours, charitable aid, benevolent societies, community groups and churches" (Baker & Du Plessis, 2018b, para. 1). In the early twentieth century, state welfare was introduced, though only the most deserving and those in poverty received this kind of compensation (Cheyne et al., 2008; Duncan, 2007). At this time, a woman's domestic role in the home was still considered a "strong moral and social" responsibility (Duncan, 2007, p. 121). A man's responsibility was to be a 'breadwinner' that earned an income to support the 'dependent' woman who cared for their children and performed household duties (Scott, 2003).

In 1926, however, a more widespread family allowance was introduced that provided financial support to "low-income married mothers with three or more children" (Baker & Du Plessis, 2018c, para. 5). However, the allowance's purpose was to "supplement the earnings for the father, not meet the costs of raising children" (Baker & Du Plessis, 2018c, para. 5), showing that social security policies were not planned to meet a woman's best interests. Instead, women were provided government assistance in the form of "training for domestic work and sewing" (McClure, 2013, p. 92). Women's rights groups at the time rightly protested that single mothers were also breadwinners of their families and deserved to receive equal rights to social security (McClure, 2013).

Around this time, Aotearoa/New Zealand society was not classless, but it had marked egalitarian characteristics. Historian Keith Sinclair states that the society was "nearly classless, however, than any other society in the world" (Sinclair, 1969, p. 276). Further, Sinclair (1969) explains that "some people [were] richer than others, but wealth carrie[d] no great prestige and no prerogative of leadership" (p. 276). This apparent near classlessness can be partially explained by New Zealand's adoption of Keynesianism in the 1930s. In response to the great depression in the 1930s, the New Zealand government adopted a Keynesian economic approach after the Second World War (Phillips, 2014). Keynesianism, a term coined by British economist John Maynard Keynes, emphasised the role of government intervention in

improving demand “to maintain prosperity and full employment” (Phillips, 2014, para 2). These ideas were at the base of New Zealand’s economy until the downfall of Robert Muldoon’s government in 1984 (Phillips, 2014).

The first Labour government, elected in 1935, endeavoured to provide “economic stability and security” for Aotearoa/New Zealand (McLintock, 1966, para. 1) after the great depression. Although families received more support overall with the first Labour government, the government was reluctant to meet women’s needs specifically. Equal pay policies that would have benefited women greatly were cast aside in exchange for the family wage (Cheyne et al., 2008). The family wage ensured that a married man received higher pay rates to support his wife and children, overall encouraging a model for “heterosexual marriage and stable nuclear families” (Baker & Tippin, 1999, p. 12). This highlights how the mode of governance at the time reinforced the gendered division of labour, which in turn, bolstered social constructions of breadwinning fathers and caregiving mothers. Labour also introduced the Social Security Act in 1938 (Duncan, 2007), a valuable source of financial support for families. This Act established “free universal entitlement to general practitioners services, public hospitals, mental hospitals and maternity care, and raised the entitlements to various benefits and pensions” (Duncan, 2007, p. 90).

The social services created by the first Labour government had positive effects towards the health of the population (McLintock, 1966). However, critics at the time argued that the high taxation levels required to uphold these “cradle to grave” social security services had adverse effects on the economy as a result (McLintock, 1966, para. 2). Furthermore, the universalisation of the family allowance was introduced in 1946, regardless of income level, and was paid to the bank account of the mother, further entrenching the belief that a woman’s role was a mother in the home (Duncan, 2007). However, during this period, historians argue that women valued the family allowance very highly, as it gave them the financial security and independence they had never experienced with governments in the past (McClure, 2013).

The 1970s saw a range of changes to women’s lived experiences in Aotearoa/New Zealand. For example, the women’s movement in Aotearoa/New Zealand challenged this social order, so that women could address “male-centred hierarchical structures of power” (Baker & Tippin, 1999, p. 480). Additionally, divorce rates began to increase worldwide, meaning there were more women in need of government support to raise their children (Baker, 1995). The rising demand of single mothers with lower incomes caused the government to create the Domestic

Purposes Benefit (DPB) in 1973 that allowed these mothers to care for their children at home (Baker & Tippin, 1999). Although the DPB was a good solution for single mothers, mothers were “increasingly expected to enter employment or combine part-time employment with state support” (Baker & Du Plessis, 2018a, para. 4). These subsidies did not support women going into full-time work as it was seen as “interfering with mothering in a society that offers weak public support for childcare” (Baker & Tippin, 1999, p. 184).

In the early 1980s, Aotearoa/New Zealand’s economy was in trouble: Welfare costs had doubled in the past couple of decades, Aotearoa/New Zealand lost their guaranteed export market when Britain joined the European Union, and the oil crisis was taking its toll on the economy (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2018b). The 1984 election marked a significant shift in Aotearoa/New Zealand politics that was popularly referred to as the “new right” era (Duncan, 2007, p. 191). A fast-tracked programme of neoliberal economic policies was put into action by Labour’s Minister of Finance, Roger Douglas (Duncan, 2007). These controversial reforms were later dubbed as ‘Rogernomics,’ after the Minister, and caused a flurry of controversy due to the radical social and economic changes it brought about (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2018a). Duncan (2007) defines neoliberalism as a “one-size-fits-all set of policies designed to enhance private enterprise and freedom of choice and to reduce the size and functions of the government” (p. 191).

These reforms had a devastating impact on those who relied on government support. In particular, many families struggled due to the emphasis on the parent’s responsibility to provide for their children with minimal support from the state (Cheyne et al., 2008). Only “neglected or at-risk children” would receive welfare support (Cheyne et al., 2008, p. 199), and means-tested allowances were provided to low-income families for childcare (Baker & Du Plessis, 2018c). As a result, this forced many women to enter the workforce so they could afford to pay the fees for private childcare. For some women, going on the DPB so they could stay at home to care for their children proved to be a more economical option. In the late 1980s, up until the introduction of 20 hours Early Childhood Education in 2007, successive governments defined and redefined support policies for childcare and early education (McDonald & May, 2018). Today, all children aged three to five years old can receive free childcare for six hours a day for up to 20 hours a week (New Zealand Government, 2020a). However, this is still not sustainable for mothers, as many are working full time to bridge the costs of childcare.

In 2004, Working for Families Tax Credits were introduced to support families with dependent children aged 18 years or younger (Inland Revenue, 2020b). The goal of this scheme is to “reduce poverty, boost incomes, increase work, and improve programme participation,” for low and middle-income families with children (Johnson, 2005, p. 7). The Best Start Tax Credit (BSTC) was made effective on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 as part of the Working for Families Tax Credits scheme to help families with the costs that come in a child’s first three years (Inland Revenue, 2020a). Today, all families are entitled to \$60 a week in their child’s first year, and when the child is between two and three years old, BSTC is income tested (Inland Revenue, 2020a). Other Working for Families Tax Credits include: In-work Tax Credit, Minimum Tax Credit, and Family Tax Credit (Inland Revenue, 2020b).

In terms of childcare, as previously stated, parents currently receive 20 hours of free early childhood education (ECE) or kōhanga reo a week at approved facilities, regardless of income (Ministry of Education, 2020). When a child reaches school age, low to middle range income families can receive Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) Subsidy to help pay for childcare before and after school depending on their situation (Ministry of Social Development, n.d.-a). Families can receive up to 20 hours of free before and after school care a week, or up to 50 hours a week for school holiday programmes (Ministry of Social Development, n.d.-a). Low to middle income families can receive the Childcare Subsidy (CCS) for up to 50 hours a week for childcare if they meet the required criteria (Ministry of Social Development, n.d.-b).

Paid parental leave was introduced in Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2002, with a total of 14 weeks of paid pre-natal and post-natal leave being available to mothers (Else, 2018). In 2016 paid parental leave for mothers was extended to 18 weeks, and to 22 weeks in 2018 (Else, 2018). As of the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2020, eligible parents and caregivers receive up to 26 weeks of paid parental leave (Employment New Zealand, 2020). Spouses or partners can take up to two weeks unpaid partner’s leave (Employment New Zealand, 2020). These subsidies remove many financial barriers associated with childcare costs; and when children benefit from these services, more parents can juggle work and family life easier (Ministry of Education, 2020).

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how working mothers manage their work and family requirements. The overall objective of my study is to determine what could be changed or improved to support women as mothers and workers in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Initially, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether choosing to be a mother is a barrier contributing towards the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As the timing of women having children often correlates with opportunities for further career advancement, I decided to interview mothers, as motherhood could potentially be a barrier to women advancing in their careers and ultimately into top leadership positions. Allowing women to openly speak about their experiences gave me insight into how they manage their work and family responsibilities.

This focus on leadership changed, however, once I started talking to the women in my study. What I found was that leadership was not the primary dynamic they talked to. Instead it was the managing of their work and family life – regardless of their leadership experiences – that they spoke about predominantly throughout their careers. It started to appear that working mothers in all positions were facing the same issues, not just women in leadership positions. This, therefore, became the new focus of my study. I draw from one-on-one semi-structured interviews with six working mothers, five Pakeha and one Māori, exploring how Aotearoa/New Zealand mothers negotiated the demands of paid work and mothering. Also, I analyse how organisational and governmental policies and practices impacted their balance of work and family. Because of this, I use the term ‘working mother’ in this thesis to include all women who balance work and family.

As mentioned previously, my research endeavours to contribute to existing feminist literature on the working mother (an important body of literature) by exploring the experiences of women as working mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Furthermore, this research will generate important insight into what steps could be taken by organisations and the government to empower women to balance work and family in a manageable and meaningful way – where women feel like they are empowered and thriving as mothers and workers.

### **Structure of the thesis**

Chapter 2 provides a review and critique of the past and present literature surrounding the experiences of the working mother. Specifically, I will look at literature that identifies and grapples with the ways working mothers navigate their career and their family responsibilities.

Chapter 3 lays out the theoretical framework of the research. I use the work of Giddens (1979; 1982; 1984; 1993) – primarily his theories around agency and structure – to analyse how

women manage their work and family responsibilities in their employment settings. By layering this framework with relevant feminist theory, I will analyse how gendered structures affect women's identities and decision-making as mothers and workers at work. I will also look at how women use their agency within these structures.

Chapter 4 outlines the qualitative methods I used in this study, which were semi-structured interviews. The overarching methodology I used was a thematic narrative analysis. I used a feminist methodological approach as it allowed me to prioritise women's voices in my research, take note of gendered structures in the women's talk, and again, to view the research from a feminist standpoint.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 analyse women's experiences as mothers and workers and the strategies they use to balance work and family. In Chapter 5, I discuss the gap between women's prenatal expectations of motherhood and their postnatal lived experiences of motherhood. This gap is generated by unrealistic expectations of motherhood, and I explain how oppressive mothering structures form these expectations, and how they are deeply ingrained in society, so they are difficult to resist.

In Chapter 6, I discuss the women's experiences of mothering guilt. There were two main situations where the women experienced guilt. The first was when the women returned to the workforce after having their children, and also when they felt they weren't giving enough time and energy to their work or to their children. I argue that women experience guilt when they feel they are breaking the "rules" of mothering and employment structures (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). I identify a guilt gap between the women and their male partners, as the women believed their male partners were not made to feel guilty in the same way they were. Towards the end of this chapter, I touch on strategies the women used to resist and manage the guilt they experienced.

Chapter 7 explores the flexible working arrangements women use to balance work and family, and to advance in their careers. I will also discuss the advantages and disadvantages of flexible working arrangements, and the ways the women used them agentically to pursue their mothering responsibilities and personal endeavours.

In Chapter 8, I provide a summary of the findings derived from the broad themes of the previous three chapters. I draw conclusions and provide recommendations for organisations

and the government on how they can help working mothers balance their work and family responsibilities in a more manageable and meaningful way.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The working mother: A review of the literature

Before I started my fieldwork, it was critical that I understood how working mothers negotiate their work and family responsibilities. The aim of this literature review, therefore, is to provide background on existing scholarship surrounding the lived experiences of working mothers, while also locating ways that my study can contribute to and extend current research. As such, the review of the literature is divided into two themes: How working mothers navigate their career and how working mothers navigate family responsibilities. These two themes are important in order to explore women's experiences in both the public (work-life) and the private (home-life) sphere, and the potential barriers they may face when moving throughout both of these spaces.

The first theme within extant literature – how working mothers navigate their career – highlights flexible working arrangements as a popular method women use to combine work and family life (Papalexandris & Kramar, 1997; White & Maniam, 2020). I outline how the literature discusses this landscape of flexible working arrangements, particularly from an Aotearoa/New Zealand context, and the positive and negative implications these kinds of arrangements may have for women.

The second theme, how working mothers navigate their family life, explores the double day phenomenon. Hochschild (1989) introduced this term in the 1980s to explain how working mothers complete a 'first shift' of their working day at work and return home to complete domestic and childcare responsibilities – known as the 'second shift'. This chapter will trace the development of scholarship surrounding the double day phenomenon and how this body of work has accounted for the impacts that the gendered divide in the home has on women. In this review of the literature, I also consider the types of support women receive from others to meet their family responsibilities, especially in the context of new mothers, and why social support is important.

#### **The working mother navigates her career**

As will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, employment is traditionally structured around a masculine/male model. Traits of the 'ideal' worker are often



characterised by the following: “working long hours, being visibly busy, committing to continuous employment for the career life span, overcommitting to meet high demands, responding to rush requests, relocating, organizing life around work, and tolerating crisis-oriented and chaotic work patterns” (Kelly et al., 2010, as cited in Bierema, 2016, p. 121). Typically, these traits have been associated with male workers, whilst at the same time being seen as masculine practices. As a result of these traits being favoured in organisations, employment structures tend to benefit men and marginalise women (Bierema, 2016). Further, Kelly et al. (2010) explain that the masculine/male model is “built on an edifice of women’s nearly invisible support” (p. 294). This shows that men are only able to sustain this model of work when their female partners shoulder the caregiving responsibilities at home.

Additionally, men are rewarded more than women for the same work, whereas women are made to work “twice as hard for half as much” (Bierema, 2016, p. 127). Because of this, women face challenges as they navigate their careers while caring for their children in an environment that tends to privilege men over women. Bierema (2016) states that women’s career development being perceived as a “deviance from the male norm” is problematic, as women are labelled “too soft, emotional,” and weak if they adopt feminine characteristics opposing the masculine/male model (p. 127). Therefore, the purpose of this section is to analyse how scholarship has addressed the challenges that working mothers face, when trying to lead successful careers.

### *Flexible working arrangements*

Since the 1960s, a range of scholars have explored the benefits of flexible working arrangements for workers and organisations alike (van Meel, 2011). Flexible working arrangements, sometimes referred to as “family-friendly working arrangements” or “work-life balance” (Dex & Scheibl, 2001, p. 412), were a response to the increased number of women participating in the workforce and the “growing diversity within and between families” (Lewis, 1997, p. 13). In today’s working world, flexible working arrangements are more common, but they are by no means mainstream (van Meel, 2011). Flexible working arrangements include “initiatives such as part time or reduced hours of work with pro rata employment benefits, job sharing, compressed work weeks, voluntary reduced time, flexible work schedules and working from home programmes” (Lewis, 1997, p. 13). They have helped working mothers combine work and family life, which has had benefits like enabling women to have more opportunities to develop their careers (Langner, 2018; Papalexandris & Kramar, 1997).

Feminist literature, however, has pointed to the issue of women engaging in flexible work to complete their childcare responsibilities *to their detriment*, while organisations benefit economically (Crompton, 2002). Crompton (2002) points out that women working flexibly to take on caring responsibilities means that: a. the gendered division of labour in the household will remain unequal, and b. flexible working arrangements have the tendency to be insecure and polarise women's future career prospects.

Much of the literature regarding flexible working arrangements refer to them as a solution to the pressures of work and family life (Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Galea et al., 2013; Langner, 2018; Lewis, 1997; Wheatley, 2017). Flexible working arrangements are a way around the masculine/male model of working characterised by long hours and constant availability, which often is the cause of work and family conflict (Tienari et al., 2002; Wheatley, 2017). Galea et al. (2013) notes that employees having control over "where, when and how" they work is a primary solution to resolving work-life conflict. In a similar vein, Wheatley (2017) notes that when organisations "facilitate 'choice'" in the use of flexible working arrangements, employees experience a higher level of job satisfaction (p. 582). Additionally, Costa et al. (2006) states that flexible working arrangements have a "clear beneficial effect" on employee "health and well-being" (p. 1136).

Studies have found that flexible working arrangements also benefit organisations as well as employees (Dex & Scheibl, 2001; Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Also, studies have found that flexible working arrangements have proved to increase employee productivity (Konrad & Mangel, 2000; Weideman & Hofmeyr, 2020). Dex and Scheibl (2001) agree that a higher percentage of women employees would make flexible working arrangements cost effective. They also reported higher levels of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, especially from female managers, improving employee retention levels and reduced turnover as a result (Dex & Scheibl, 2001). Thomas and Ganster (1995) argue that these positive benefits of flexible working arrangements may be attributed to increased "employee perceptions of control" (p. 13). This, then, has the potential to increase the employee's "ability to cope with competing demands," such as work and family, which can significantly reduce stress (Thomas & Ganster, 1995, p. 13). In a qualitative study by the New Zealand Families Commission, respondents stated that flexible working arrangements allowed them "more quality family time" and made the negotiating of work and family less stressful, especially when covering "changing circumstances" such as illness or school holidays (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009, p. 28).

As well as having flexible working arrangements available in organisations, research shows that it is just as important for employees to perceive their organisational culture as “family-supportive,” to encourage their uptake of these arrangements (Allen, 2001, p. 414; Thomas & Ganster, 1995, p. 6). Furthermore, Thomas & Ganster (1995) suggest that an exemplary family-supportive culture is composed of “family-supportive policies” and “family-supportive supervisors” (p. 7). A family-supportive organisational culture encourages employees to balance work and family life, and ensures their organisational norms and values reflect this (Allen, 2001).

While these studies speak to the benefits of flexible working arrangements, there is also well-established commentary on their negative implications (Chung, 2018; Crompton, 2002; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Rogier and Padgett, 2004; Silver & Goldscheider, 1993; Sullivan & Lewis, 2001; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2018). Many working mothers face a “flexibility stigma,” which is the belief that those who use flexible working arrangements are “less productive and less committed to the workplace” (Chung, 2018, p. 1). Furthermore, working mothers in Chung’s (2018) study (using data from the 2011 Work-Life Balance Survey of 2,767 UK workers) reported that they experienced “some sort of negative career consequence” (p. 20). This included a drop in wages, negative relationships with co-workers, or missing out on certain projects (Chung, 2018). Additionally, they were more likely to agree that “flexible workers were less likely to be promoted” (Chung, 2018, p. 20). Similarly, Rogier and Padgett (2004) found in their study that female employees who worked flexibly were seen to have “less job-career dedication” and “less advancement motivation” than female employees on regular schedules (p. 89).

It has also been found that flexible working arrangements intensify the workload of employees, who also may feel obligated to “reciprocate with additional effort” (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010, p. 98). Scholarship has also discussed how working from home may exploit women through reinforcing a woman’s “greater responsibility for childcare and the management of the family” compared to their male partner (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001, p. 141). In their UK qualitative study, Sullivan and Lewis (2001) found that childcare was the main motivation for women working at home, but not for men. This shows that women consider childcare in their decision making regarding their career, while men do not have to. Additionally, it has been noted that the more flexible a working mother’s schedule, the more time she will spend on doing unpaid domestic chores at home, worsening work-family conflict as a result (Silver & Goldscheider, 1993; van der Lippe & Lippényi, 2018). In this respect, flexible working arrangements allow mothers to engage in what Hochschild (1989) articulates

as the 'second shift,' thus keeping gendered divisions of labour and gendered structures of power intact. Crompton (2002) adds that women's participation in flexible working, while completing their childcare and domestic work, contributes to the "intensification of capitalism" and ultimately exploits women (p. 551). This is because paid work in the public sphere is deemed as more important by society, therefore, the unpaid caregiving work occurring in the private sphere of the home revolves around paid work. Further, it has also been found that women may also feel isolated when working from home, missing the social aspects of work (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001).

From a feminist perspective, Masselot (2015) further unpacks the negative impact of flexible working arrangements on women. Firstly, the gender-neutral language used in New Zealand legislation regarding flexible working arrangements does not aid working women's rights. Instead, it treats "men and women as if they carried the care burden equally" (p. 71). In reality, flexible working arrangements are a "gender-charged concept," as unpaid domestic and caring responsibilities disproportionately fall on women, and flexible working allows them more time to complete this unpaid work, therefore reinforcing "traditional gender roles" (Masselot, 2015, p. 71). Schultz (2010) states that because work flexibility is gendered, and women disproportionately opt for flexible work arrangements, this tends to "exacerbate women's marginalized status rather than improve it" (p. 1216). In "the name of flexibility," employers can offer subpar flexibility arrangements that suit them and marginalise women, leaving women with less pay, job insecurity, and fewer career advancement opportunities (Schultz, 2010, p. 1215). Crompton (2002) also points out how the negative aspects flexibility are often disguised as a "positive contribution to the reconciliation of employment and family life" (p. 546).

Masselot (2015), therefore, argues that unpaid work, such as caregiving and domestic responsibilities, needs to be valued more, and shared equally between men and women. Crompton (2002) agrees, suggesting that the gendered division of labour in the household may improve when the social (the private sphere) is not seen as being "constrained by the economic," but instead, the economic is seen as being embedded within the social (p. 546). This would create a new perspective in which family life and employment are seen as intertwined with each other in a more manageable way (Crompton, 2002).

## **The working mother navigates family responsibilities**

Another key issue identified in the literature is that many working mothers find it challenging navigating their family responsibilities around their careers. This section will explore the phenomenon of the 'double day' or 'the second shift,' which involves women working one shift at work, and another shift to undertake the caring and domestic responsibilities at home (Hochschild, 1989). Additionally, I will discuss the importance of support as a method of balancing work and family.

### *The double day*

Hochschild (1989) pioneered the line of research regarding the double day and spurred other researchers into action to study the gendered divide in the home. In her first study, which took place during 1976 to 1988, she conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 145 people based in the US including 50 couples, and 45 other people "including baby-sitters, day-care workers, schoolteachers, traditional couples with small children, and divorcées who had been in two-job couples" (Hochschild, 1989, p. 280). Additionally, the study used quantitative data from surveys of the families and time use data from the 1960s and 1970s to supplement the in-depth interviews (Hochschild, 1989). She found that women worked "fifteen hours longer each week than men," which equated to an extra month a year (Hochschild, 1989, p. 3), and also found that women complete two-thirds of the "daily jobs" at home (Hochschild, 1989, p. 8). Hochschild (1989) continued to revise her work (see Hochschild, 2003; Hochschild, 2012), but ultimately concluded that there is an unequal gendered division of labour in the household.

Following on from Hochschild's (1989) ground-breaking research, many researchers have assessed the validity of the double day in different contexts (see Bittman & Wajcman, 2004; Craig, 2006; Croft et al., 2014; Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2020; Firestone & Shelton, 1994; Milkie et al., 2009; Wharton, 1994). Some studies challenged Hochschild's hypothesis. Milkie et al. (2009) and Bittman and Wajcman (2004) both disagree with Hochschild's (1989) claim that women work an extra 15 hours a week longer than men. Milkie et al. (2009) used data from two American time diary collections: combined files from the 2003-2005 American Time Use Survey that had a sample of 6,724 respondents, and the 2000-2001 National Survey of Parents with a sample of 1,200 respondents. Bittman and Wajcman (2004) used a subset of data from the 1961 – 1992 Multinational Time Budget Data Archive, restricted to a pool of 46,933 respondents conducted from 1985 onwards in 10 OECD countries. For comparison, they

included data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1992 Time Use Survey, which contained a sample of 13,937 diary days (Bittman and Wajcman, 2004). Specifically, Bittman and Wajcman (2004) argue that the gender difference between the total work hours is “surprisingly small,” with women working on average 1 hour and 22 minutes longer a week (p. 178).

These challenges questioning the validity of Hochschild’s findings have been disputed. For example, Craig (2006) points out that many studies testing the validity of the double day do not take multitasking into account, which in turn, results in androcentric bias – the tendency to centre research around men’s needs, interests, and experiences (Bailey et al., 2018). In aiming for a more accurate measurement of the double day, Craig’s (2006) quantitative study of time-use data in Australia captures secondary activity, such as keeping an eye on the children while cooking, so that multitasking is factored in, which provides a “more meaningful gender comparison” than previous studies (p. 155). She states that women often multitask more than men, and she asserts that “supervisory and facilitative care is both necessary and constraining” (Craig, 2006, p. 154). The way this data is often overlooked by other researchers contributes to a wider issue that childcare is still not recognised as “real work” (Craig, 2006, p. 154). Craig (2006) discovered that when secondary activities are included, women, on average, work “20 to 25% more when there is a pre-school child in the family,” and “15% more when the youngest child is at primary school” (p. 165).

Qualitative feminist research (undertaken in the US and India) has also provided important commentary validating Hochschild’s account of the double day (Lahiri-Dutt & Sil, 2014; Wharton, 1994). This body of feminist work brings to light how the amount of time women spend on caring and domestic activities is “not valued and not recognized as productive,” which explains why it remains unpaid work (Lahiri-Dutt & Sil, 2014, p. 402). The qualitative aspect of this feminist literature emphasises the importance of giving women agency to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions in relation to their own experience of the double day (Blee and Taylor, 2002; Lahiri-Dutt & Sil, 2014; Wharton, 1994).

An important aspect that must be considered is the impact that the flexibility of paid work has on the double day. Wharton’s (1994) qualitative study using in-depth interviews of 30 US women analysed their experiences working in real estate, and the “effects of flexible scheduling on the tasks of managing paid and domestic work” (Wharton, 1994, p. 189). The respondents stated that they chose their field of work because they believe the job “would be compatible with their domestic responsibilities” (p. 194). This shows that before even going

into real estate work, these women were already subjected to the double day, and this is the case for many women who choose to work flexibly. Furthermore, most double day researchers note that women undertake the majority of unpaid work such as domestic and childcare responsibilities (Bittman & Wajcman, 2004; Craig, 2006; Hochschild, 2012; MacDonald et al., 2005; Milkie et al., 2009). This raises the ongoing problem regarding domestic and childcare responsibilities being deemed a woman's responsibility, further reinforcing the gendered divide in the home.

Researchers have also explored the effects that paid and unpaid work have on women and men's leisure time, in order to discover if there are significant differences (Bittman & Wajcman, 2004; Firestone & Shelton, 1994). The purpose of Firestone and Shelton's (1994) US study, for example, was to determine if there were gender differences in leisure time, and also the impact that paid and unpaid work has on leisure time. In terms of leisure, they differentiated between non-domestic leisure and domestic leisure. By definition, non-domestic leisure requires "an initial decision to undertake the activity," and often involves leaving the house (Firestone & Shelton, 1994, p. 46), whereas domestic leisure is often "accomplished as free time becomes available" (Firestone & Shelton, 1994, p. 54). They found that for every hour men spend doing paid work, they spend 5 minutes less on non-domestic leisure, whereas women spent 14 minutes less on non-domestic leisure for every paid working hour. Additionally, they found that women spend 12 less hours per week on domestic leisure than men (Firestone and Shelton, 1994). Other studies differed in results. Bittman and Wajcman's (2004) study, for instance, concluded that the difference between women's and men's leisure time was not large in general, with men on average enjoying an extra 3.9% more leisure time than women (Bittman & Wajcman, 2004). However, the leisure gap between women and men that were married and working full-time was twice as much, at 8.3% (Bittman & Wajcman, 2004). Regardless of the disparities, these studies all show that the double day has an impact on women's leisure time, and that men benefit from this, as they tend to enjoy more high-quality leisure time than women do.

Dugan and Barnes-Farrell (2020) studied the stress levels of working mothers in the US and how the second shift impacted this stress. A sample of 440 US working mothers were surveyed online, and five variables (the second shift, energy resources, time resources, self-care, and stress) were measured (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2020). They found that the second shift depleted the working mothers' time and energy resources, which resulted in higher stress levels (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2020). Additionally, they discovered that self-care reduced the women's stress levels, and was an important factor in improving health and wellbeing

outcomes for the women (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2020). This shows the importance of women and men sharing the second shift and having a more egalitarian division of labour in the household is in the best interests of women's overall health. Furthermore, Croft et al. (2014) found another benefit of a shared second shift. In their quantitative study of 326 Canadian children aged seven to 13, they found that when the second shift was shared, the daughters in particular expressed greater interest in "working outside the home and having a less stereotypical occupation" (p. 1418). This confirms the importance of men and women sharing the second shift and reveals the potential for greater gender equality outcomes in the workforce for future generations (Croft et al., 2014).

### Support from others

Another topic explored within the literature concerns the ways in which women negotiate various support systems to help them meet their family responsibilities while balancing work. The majority of these studies pay particular attention to new mothers, and the effects of social support during the postpartum period (Hung & Chung, 2001; Leahy-Warren et al., 2011; Manuel et al., 2012; Negron et al., 2013; Razurel et al., 2011). Most of these studies have been quantitative (Hung & Chung, 2001; Leahy-Warren et al., 2011; Manuel et al., 2012), surveying women regarding their social support needs in their children's early years. In saying this, there is a small collection of qualitative studies that further explore women's experiences with social support, and challenges with a lack thereof (McLeish and Redshaw; 2017; Negron et al., 2013; Razurel et al., 2011).

This body of literature defines the types of social support new mothers experience postpartum, mainly in the form of instrumental and emotional support (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011; Manuel et al., 2012; Negron et al., 2013). Negron et al. (2013) vaguely describes instrumental support as "meeting women's basic needs" (p. 616). Manuel et al. (2012) goes into more detail, stating that instrumental support includes "tangible and financial support" such as "loaning money and providing childcare" (p. 2014). Emotional support is defined as "companionship and intimacy" (Manuel et al., 2012, p. 2014), and the "emotive sharing of experiences" (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011, p. 175). From their quantitative longitudinal study of US mothers, Manuel et al. (2012) emphasised the importance of instrumental and emotional support for mothers with young children as it can provide some protection against depression. Manuel et al. (2012) also highlights that emotional support by "partners, spouses, and significant others was more protective against depression than instrumental support" (p. 2018). In their quantitative longitudinal study of Irish mothers, Leahy-Warren et al. (2011)



confirmed that low levels of social support were related to postnatal depression in new mothers, with depression rates being especially high at six weeks postpartum, sitting at 13.6%.

When reviewing qualitative research on social support, it is evident that the scholars bring out more depth from the women's experiences (McLeish and Redshaw, 2017; Negron et al., 2013; Razurel et al., 2011). McLeish and Redshaw (2017) found in their semi-structured interviews with UK mothers that although the mothers appeared to have support, they lacked "meaningful social connection" (p. 5). This meant that women felt "unable to share difficult thoughts and feelings" (p. 6) with their loved ones for fear of receiving judgment or criticism (McLeish & Redshaw, 2017). Despite this, they discovered that mothers who had taken part in peer support experienced increased feelings of "self-esteem, self-efficacy and parenting competence" (p. 13). In Razurel et al.'s (2011) qualitative study conducted in the maternity unit at a hospital in Geneva, Switzerland, they found that the mothers considered emotional support, especially to "maintain self-esteem" as the "most important factor" (p. 240). In Negron et al.'s (2013) study of Hispanic/Latina mothers, African American mothers, white mothers, and non-black, non-Hispanic mothers, the women found instrumental support to be the most essential, as having their basic needs met helped normalise their experience as new mothers. Overall, this evidence indicates important insights into the positive outcomes of social support, and the potential consequences for new mothers if they do not receive sufficient support.

### **In conclusion**

This literature review has investigated how working mothers navigate their careers and their family lives as understood by scholars. Overall, the existing research I reviewed identified that working mothers face significant obstacles in both aspects of navigating a successful career and family responsibilities.

Although the lives of working mothers may be perceived to be easier when flexible working arrangements are in place, research shows that this is not always the case. A surprising discovery I found within the literature on flexible working, was that these arrangements can be seen as "gender-charged concepts" (Masselot, 2015, p. 71). This is because they allow women more time to complete unpaid work, including childcare and domestic work, therefore reinforcing "traditional gender roles" (Masselot, 2015, p. 71).

Also, existing research regarding the double day emphasised that there is still an unequal division of labour in the home, due to childcare and domestic tasks being seen as a women's responsibility (Craig, 2006; Hochschild, 2012; MacDonald et al., 2005; Milkie et al., 2009). This is concerning, as these findings suggest that although there is progression in terms of gendered expectations within the public sphere, with more women leading successful careers, there is less progression in how women are expected to carry out family responsibilities in the private sphere. Furthermore, existing research highlighted the importance of social support for new mothers, and in particular, instrumental and emotional support (Leahy-Warren et al., 2011; Manuel et al., 2012; Negron et al., 2013). Scholars have identified that a lack of support can lead to high stress levels and risk of postnatal depression (Hung & Chung, 2001; Leahy-Warren et al., 2011; Manuel et al., 2012; Negron et al., 2013; Razurel et al., 2011).

I will aim to address the gaps in the literature surrounding social support. Particularly, there is very little research on social support for mothers who are beyond the postpartum period and are caring for young children. As my research included women with more established careers that juggle work and family, it is likely that their children will be school-aged, or at least in a childcare setting. I am interested to discover what social support looks like on a weekly basis for the women in my study, and how they value support comparatively to what is discussed in the extant literature. Additionally, I aim to determine whether there are any cultural differences to the extant literature in an Aotearoa/New Zealand context. Examining the forms of social support discussed in the extant literature and their benefits are especially important for my research. This is because, if my research findings uncover that women require more social support to maintain successful careers in Aotearoa/New Zealand, then it must be clarified what kind of support is required.

There is a limited body of qualitative feminist research concerning the double day. These feminist perspectives are in line with my research standpoint, and I am hoping that my own study will contribute to this emerging area of qualitative research on the double day. It is important for women to be able to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions, and this cannot be achieved by the use of time diary data alone. Also, I am particularly interested in determining whether there is a gender gap in leisure participation, specifically within an Aotearoa/New Zealand context.

Most of the scholarship I have found concerning working mothers is based outside Aotearoa/New Zealand. My study therefore will fill this gap in Aotearoa/New Zealand scholarship through analysing and making sense of what types of obstacles working mothers in

Aotearoa/New Zealand face. Specifically, the data chapters of this thesis will explore how women balance work and family in order to paint a bigger picture of *how* women navigate this difficult terrain.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Theoretical framework

My project is an inquiry into how women manage their work and family responsibilities. Theoretical tools are needed to look into how social expectations, gendered power, and one's subjective identity work within women's lives. The main way I have chosen to analyse this is through Giddens' (1979; 1982; 1984; 1993) theory regarding agency and structure. Giddens' theory provides a lens to dissect how the women I talked to live within structures that influenced their decision-making, and how these structures proceeded to influence their identities as mothers and workers. Furthermore, Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration shows how mothering and employment structures have evolved over time, giving women more freedom to use their agency than in the past. In this chapter, I refer to the works of Giddens (1979; 1982; 1984; 1993) to analyse mothering and employment structures, and how they have gone through a process of structuration. However, Giddens work can only take us so far in considering gendered implications of work life and mothering. For this reason, I will also layer Giddens' theoretical underpinnings with key feminist thinking (Hays, 1994; Green, 2019; O'Reilly, 2016; Rich, 1986) in order to further explicate how women's identities as working mothers are constituted.

#### **Giddens, agency, and structure**

The nature of women's experiences as working mothers within their workplaces can be viewed through the relationship between agency and structure, which is a central debate in sociology. The structure and agency debate centres around how social structures affect the decision-making of individuals and defines the limits on an individual's capability to act independently of social structures; that is to say, defining the limits on human agency (Abercrombie et al., 2000). In relation to my research, I will determine how the relationship between structure and agency plays out within the women's roles as working mothers. Furthermore, I am interested to see how women talk about the power they may feel they have as agents to recreate the structures, within which they interact. In particular, I want to identify which structures have the most constraining effect on women, and what could be done to give working mothers more agency in society.

There are many different positions sociologists hold in the agency and structure debate (Archer, 1988; Bourdieu, 1977; Parsons, 1966). However, the standpoint I have chosen comes

from the works of Anthony Giddens, a British sociologist well-renowned for his unique contributions to exploring the relationships between agency and structure (Scott & Marshall, 2005). As opposed to more functionalist sociologists who believe that structures are external to human agents and determine their “characteristics and actions,” (Abercrombie et al., 2000, p. 9), Giddens (1984) believes that structures are “sets of rules and resources” that are embodied by human agents (p. 184), who produce and reproduce these rules and resources in their social practices (Scott & Marshall, 2005). In the context of this study, the “rules and resources” are the norms and expectations that are centred around family, gender, and motherhood (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Within my data chapters (see Chapters 5 to 7) I want to locate these “sets of rules and resources” within the women’s talk and the effect it has on their balance of work and family life (Giddens, 1984, p. 184).

Furthermore, Giddens explains that structures are properties of social systems, which are “reproduced social practices” between human agents, groups, and collectivities that enact “structural properties” (Giddens, 1993, p. 17). Giddens also founded the theory of structuration (see Giddens, 1979; Giddens, 1982; Giddens, 1984; Giddens, 1993), which refers to the way social systems are reproduced over time through activities and practices. Best (2003) describes structuration as a process where individuals are in “a constant process of creation and recreation of social life and social structure” (p. 183). This flows into what Giddens (1993) calls “the duality of structure” (p. 128), a perspective that moves away from the divide between agency and structure, and towards a synthesis of the two. He explains that “social structure is both constituted *by* human agency and yet is at the same time the very medium of this constitution” (Giddens, 1993, p. 128 - 129). Additionally, according to the notion of the duality of structure, structures are “both constraining and enabling” to the social practices of human agents (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). For example, structures are enabling in the ways they “open up certain possibilities of action” and constraining when they “restrict or deny” other possibilities of action (Giddens, 1984, p. 173). In my research, I am interested to see whether the women speak about the potential to overcome the constraining features of structures they reside in and how this may take form in their lives (see Chapter 8).

### **Defining mothering as a structure**

Giddens (1984) stating that structures can both be constraining and enabling can be applied to examining women’s experiences as working mothers. Giddens alone, however, does not provide enough tools to explore the gendered nature of mothering structures. Therefore, I have turned to other scholars to add in more gendered elements to understanding

structuration when looking at mothering (DiQuinzio, 1999; Green, 2019; Hays, 1994; O'Reilly, 2008; O'Reilly, 2016; Rich, 1986).

I first turn to Hays' (1994) useful account of gender stratification as an example of an overarching structure that helps people understand their position in social hierarchy in terms of the distribution of power and wealth, where due to patriarchal structures, men are often ranked above women. She states that gender stratification "not only constrains men and women to act in certain ways" but it also "gives them both a sense of identity and a secure position in the world" (p. 61). As will be discussed in the data chapters of this thesis (see Chapters 5 to 7), this too applies in relation to some of the women in my study. From listening to them talk, I gained insight into *the complexities* of how they negotiated their identities as mothers and employees. Here, Giddens' (1993) model of structuration is complementary as it enables an analysis of how oppressive gendered structures (like mothering) both can constrain and enable women's agency within the same system.

When reviewing mothering structures, it is evident that women adhere to "sets of rules and resources" (Giddens, 1984, p. 184) that they produce and reproduce in their social practices (Scott & Marshall, 2005). In this chapter, I will define the "rules" and structural features of mothering (Giddens, 1984, p. 184), and why they are constraining for women. The main structural features of mothering I will focus on in this thesis relate to the idealisation of mothers who: a) appear 'natural' (Chandler & Munday, 2016; Neyer & Bernardi, 2011); b) invest in intensive mothering; and c) reproduce the ideals associated with the nuclear family (Collins, 1994). In this chapter, I also explore how mothering is structured differently in a Māori context (Pihama, 2011; Rimene et al., 1998).

Additionally, when viewing mothering through a feminist lens, it uncovers the oppressive qualities of patriarchal mothering structures, and the ability to engage in feminist mothering (DiQuinzio, 1999; Green, 2019; O'Reilly, 2016; Rich, 1986). A pioneering scholar, Rich (1986), describes two different sides of mothering: "the *potential* relationship of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children" and "the *institution* which aims at ensuring that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control" (p. 13, emphasis in original). The 'institution' of mothering is a patriarchal structure that oppresses, exploits, and restricts women, as they are marginalised if they deviate outside the prescribed ideals of the institution (Rich, 1986). Green (2009) explains that recognising motherhood as an 'institution' is important, as it highlights the oppressive social structures that "prescribe and shape" women's lives (p. 23).

The definition of mothering as a woman's ability to reproduce is connected to biological essentialism (also referred to as the naturalisation of mothering), which claims that women are born to be natural mothers. This is arguably the most deeply ingrained structural feature of mothering, and the most constraining. Biological essentialism stems from the belief that a particular quality of an individual is an "innate and natural 'essence,'" as opposed to "a product of circumstances, upbringing, and culture" (Chandler & Munday, 2016, p. 13). It is believed that a mother's 'natural' responsibility to care for her children is "strengthened by the visibility of a woman's reproductive capacity" (Gustafson, 2005, p. 3). As a result, women are held back by the notion that aspects of mothering are considered 'natural' and 'innate' to women, and inevitable due to their biological makeup (DiQuinzio, 1999). Biological essentialism is a structural feature of mothering that is deep-seated in society, largely because social systems have reproduced the 'rules' of this structure for centuries, making it difficult for women to defy this structure (Giddens, 1993; O'Reilly, 2016). These "rules" include the expectation that women will instinctively know what to do to care for their children, when in reality, this process is learned over time (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Additionally, what this structure promotes regarding the naturalisation of motherhood can have an impact on women who don't feel they fit the profile of being a 'natural' mother. As researchers have outlined, this can be a leading cause of postnatal depression (Rogan et al., 1997). In a study of 55 new mothers in Australia, it was found that many of the women felt overwhelmed, unprepared, doubted their mothering abilities, and felt unsure of their identities post-partum (Rogan et al., 1997). These experiences resulted in strong feelings of loneliness, lack of confidence, and a loss of identity for the women in this study (Rogan et al., 1997).

Mothering structures assign the role of 'mother' to women and attribute the "material conditions, social relations, and social contexts" that support mothering roles to natural causes, therefore contributing to the oppression of women (DiQuinzio, 1999, p. 5). O'Reilly (2016) explains that defining motherhood as 'essential,' positions mothering at the cornerstone of a woman's identity, and naturalisation assumes that motherhood is 'natural' to women. Historically, assigning women the natural mothering role maintained patriarchal structures by allowing men to gain control over women's lives for their own benefit (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011). For example, traditionally, in patriarchal structures, men were treated as equal members of society, while women were "relegated to nature, with childbearing and motherhood forming the core of women's nature" (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165). Furthermore, defining mothering as 'natural' is oppressive for women when childrearing responsibilities are denied as 'real' work and labelled as a woman's "natural responsibility," performed out of "natural love" (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165).

The ideas and assumptions that underpin the belief that mothering should be the product of natural instinct deeply affect how women are supposed to feel and behave when they become mothers. For example, the joys of motherhood are an ideal that is celebrated in Western societies, such as mothers seeing their children learning new things and achieving milestones (Ross, 2016). Further to this, there is the underlying cultural assumption that motherhood is supposed to provide “ultimate fulfilment for all women” (Ross, 2016, p. 3). This poses the idea that motherhood is a woman’s “central identity,” and the “key aspect” of her life, with other identities revolving around mothering activities (Woollett & Marshall, 2001, p. 172). Another cultural assumption is the way motherhood is treated as “proof of adulthood and a natural consequence of marriage or a permanent relationship with a man” (Letherby, 1994). If a woman’s circumstances or way of mothering fall outside the cultural norm, they are often judged and scrutinised by those who expect them to follow societal expectations of mothering (DiQuinzio, 1999; Lamar et al., 2019). This is often the case for working mothers, who also deal with the competing societal expectation of succeeding in their career of choice. Within my data chapters (see Chapters 5 to 7), I will evaluate how the working mothers in my study make sense of biological essentialism in their own lives.

The rules surrounding intensive mothering make up additional constraining structural features that women need to navigate. Coined by Hays (1996), intensive mothering is a “child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour-intensive, and financially expensive” method of raising children (p. 8). Intensive mothers are known to devote their time, money, and energy towards their children, giving them consistent nurturing at each stage of their development (Hays, 1996; Lamar et al., 2019). Intensive mothers follow medical and other expert parenting advice to ensure “optimal brain development” in their children’s early years to further “intellectual potential” in the future (Wall, 2010, p. 254). The importance placed on maximising a child’s potential puts immense pressure on mothers to give their children their undivided attention, and often results in women constantly questioning how their parenting is impacting their children (Wall, 2010). Essentially, it is a prescriptive account of how to be a ‘good’ mother.

Hays (1996) explains that intensive mothering was socially constructed in the 1980s where “child labour laws and compulsory schooling” was enforced. Women were excluded from certain kinds of work as a result and reduced their hours to stay at home to focus on mothering, essentially being re-domesticated, while the family wage system encouraged men to provide as the breadwinner for their families (Hays, 1996). As a result of the promotion of intensive mothering, women often feel pressure to live up to the societal expectations of a



‘good mother,’ even if they are working too. For example, it has been found that nurses who worked the night shift, did so in order to commit to staying at home with their children during the day (Garey, 1995). This allowed these women to fulfil their commitment to work alongside their commitment to intensive mothering, despite their sacrifice of sleep (Garey, 1995). In my data chapters (see Chapters 5 to 7) I aim to identify moments where the women feel this pressure to be ‘good’ mothers, and if they make any personal sacrifices to reach this constraining, social standard.

Another problematic structural feature associated with mothering is the ‘nuclear family.’ The nuclear family has been held as a cultural norm largely in Western societies for the past few generations (Popenoe, 1987) and comprises of a family structure centred around a married, heterosexual couple who are focused on raising their two or three children (Edgell & Docka, 2007). The nuclear family is traditionally based on a gendered, patriarchal structure, with “the man working outside the home and the woman being a mother and full-time housewife” (Popenoe, 1987, p. 174). It is thought to be the “gold standard of the family” and the “best” structure for mothering to occur (Bravo-Moreno, 2019, p. 4). This structure separates women and men, with women assuming the role of “affective nurturing, mainly mothering,” and men assuming the role of “economic providing” (Collins, 1994, p. 46). As a result, women who stay at home raising their children and doing the majority of the housework can feel isolated whilst also being classed as dependents to their male partners (Edgell & Docka, 2007).

Mothering can be defined differently though, when placed within different cultural structures. In Māori culture especially, mothering is treated very differently. In Māori creation mythology, the first human was a woman, “Hine-Ahu-One,” signifying the mana<sup>2</sup> of women, and how highly regarded women are in Māori culture (Rimene et al., 1998, p. 26). This resonates with how Māori culture signifies the importance of being hapū, which is “being pregnant and giving birth to the next generation” (Pihama, 2011, p. 3). Mothering is highly regarded by Māori, as representing the continuation of whakapapa<sup>3</sup> and the preservation of next generations.

Rimene et al. (1998) explain this in more detail:

The continuation of whakapapa, to continue the lineage of whānau<sup>4</sup>, and hence the continuation of hapū<sup>5</sup> and iwi<sup>6</sup>, is central not only to Māori way of life, but is central to

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<sup>2</sup> Mana is a Māori term that can be translated as a spiritual life force, essence, or presence.

<sup>3</sup> Whakapapa is a Māori word that can be translated as genealogy, lineage, or descent.

<sup>4</sup> Whānau can be translated as extended family.

<sup>5</sup> In this context, hapū is a section of a large kinship group, and the primary political unit in traditional Māori society that consists of a number of whānau.

<sup>6</sup> Iwi can be translated as tribe and consists of several related hapū.

the continuation of life itself. Not only is the creation of the next generation essential, but the links the new generation makes with other whānau, hapū and iwi are also important (p. 27).

In Māori culture, mothering is not left solely to the biological mother; instead, it is shared by whānau, the extended family. Traditionally, “the value of maintaining collaborative relationships within the whanau” were taught to the tamariki, and passed on to the next generation, connecting old and new whānau (Moeke-Pickering, 1996, p. 9). Although Māori still adhere to traditional structures regarding whānau, many women have lost the extended support of whānau through urbanisation, as whānau units have become progressively smaller over time (Simmonds, 2011). Despite this, the definition of whānau has been extended further in recent times to include Māori people who share commonalities such as a marae and a workplace (Le Grice et al., 2017; Metge, 2014; Smith, 1995). As one of the women I interviewed is of Māori descent, I am interested to discover how she specifically negotiated mothering and work within my data chapters (see Chapters 5 to 7).

Feminist scholars have long discussed how mothering can be viewed through a feminist lens, and how to engage in feminist types of mothering (DiQuinzio, 1999; Green, 2009; O’Reilly, 2008; Rich, 1986). As mentioned earlier, the ‘institution’ of mothering is a patriarchal structure that oppresses, exploits, and restricts women, ensuring that they remain under male control (Rich, 1986). Green (2009) points out that perceiving motherhood through the institution is important, as it is a “culmination of social structures” that “prescribe and shape” women’s lives (p. 23). Despite the constraining effects of the ‘institution,’ O’Reilly (2016) notes that since it is “socially constructed, it can be challenged and changed” (p. 16). Furthermore, hooks (2014) affirms that feminism is “pro-family,” and “ending patriarchal domination” will ensure a safe, loving environment that will be beneficial to parents and children (p. 77).

Aside from the ‘institution’ of mothering, is the potential for women to draw from their experiences of mothering as a source of power, and engage in feminist mothering (Green, 2009; O’Reilly, 2016; Rich, 1986). O’Reilly (2016) simply defines feminist mothering as the “negation” of patriarchal motherhood, saying that it is “determined more by what it is not” than what it is (p. 137). In her study of 16 women who identified as feminists, Green (2009) found that her participants could “break the rules and create some distance” from the ‘institution’ of motherhood (p. 113). The participants defined mothering on their own terms, and as a result, mothering became “a dynamic place for creativity” for them (Green, 2009, p. 113). O’Reilly (2016) adds to this, explaining that within feminist mothering, women can find

ways to “practice agency, resistance, and renewal” in their own experiences of mothering (p. 139).

O’Reilly (2008) suggests that women resist patriarchal modes of mothering through the practice of empowered mothering. She states that empowered mothering “recognises that both mothers and children benefit when the mother lives her life and practices mothering from a position of agency, authority, authenticity, and autonomy” (O’Reilly, 2008, p. 7). Furthermore, empowered mothering is a feminist goal, as it frames motherhood as a “political site” where mothers can enact social change through the ways they raise their children (O’Reilly, 2008, p. 7). Examples of empowered mothering are when mothers: meet their own needs as well as their children’s; do not always put their children’s needs before their own; and ask for help with childcare from partners, friends, and family (O’Reilly, 2008). Through practicing empowered mothering, women can take a stand against oppressive, gendered structures (such as the naturalisation of mothering, intensive mothering, and the nuclear family). In turn, women can use their agency to evolve oppressive structures, and can empower their children to do the same, enacting positive social change for future mothers. Within my research, I hope to discover moments in the women’s talk where they used empowered mothering and resisted against oppressive structures.

Building around her work on empowered mothering, O’Reilly (2016) recently introduced a new mode of feminism: matricentric feminism. This is a new genre of feminism that centres around mothers, “contests, challenges, and counters the patriarchal oppressive institution of motherhood,” and aims to accomplish a “maternal identity and practice that is empowering to mothers” (O’Reilly, 2019, p. 18). Additionally, O’Reilly (2016) and Green (2019) note that matricentric feminism honours mothering work and contributes to feminist practice. O’Reilly (2019) deems motherhood as the “unfinished business of feminism” (p. 13). She points out that despite over four decades of feminism, mothers still remain highly oppressed, which is why they need a feminist movement that focuses solely around motherhood (O’Reilly, 2019). In her longitudinal study (from 1995 to 2007) of Canadian mothers and their children, Green (2019) states how her participants engaged in matricentric feminist practice. She explains a situation where a mother “encouraged her daughters to engage in an egalitarian relationship with her” so they could develop “an autonomous sense of self” (Green, 2019, p. 92). This is a matricentric practice feminist mothers can use to resist the “rules” (Giddens, 1984, p. 184) of intensive mothering structures, and challenge notions of how women are expected to mother (Green, 2019).

### Mothering guilt

Mothering guilt is a by-product that can occur when women break or deviate from the structural rules of mothering. As will be discussed further below, examples of these “rules” include a) women should prioritise their child’s needs over their own, and b) mothers should stay home with their children (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Furthermore, when mothers feel guilt, they reproduce the constraining structural rules of mothering, which as a result, remain deeply ingrained in society (Giddens, 1984). As long as women feel guilt from deviating from these kinds of structural rules, these rules will continue to be reproduced over time (Giddens, 1984). There are different bodies of knowledge that explore the varying ways in which women experience mothering guilt including: guilt in comparison to other women or rules of ‘good mothering’ (Hays, 1996; Henderson et al., 2015; Sutherland, 2010); working mother guilt (Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Okimoto & Heilman, 2012); and stay-at-home mother guilt (Liss et al., 2013; Rubin & Wooten, 2007).

In her investigation into the literature surrounding mothering guilt, Sutherland (2010) shows from a sociological perspective that mothering guilt can occur on many different levels. She explains further that the guilt and shame women face as mothers in the workforce are both “cultural and institutional,” and occur on three different levels (Sutherland, 2010, p. 312). The first is guilt experienced at a “macro-level,” where mothers attempt to live up to ‘good’ mother expectations of society, the “meso-level” where women compare themselves to others in their social circles that they feel are mothering better than them, and the “micro-level,” which is the women’s experience of guilt surrounding the highly gendered responsibility of running the household (Sutherland, 2010, p. 312). Sutherland (2010) also identifies the gap in the literature concerning the homogeneity of the research surrounding mothering guilt and points out that mothering occurs “within the intersecting structures of race, ethnicity, social class and sexuality” (p. 312). She refers to a quote from Collins (1994), which states that, “motherhood cannot be analyzed in isolation from its context” (p. 45). This shows that mothers can feel guilt for different reasons, depending on their culture or socioeconomic background, and this distinction is not widely regarded in the literature. This observation highlights the need to acknowledge these cultural and social differences in my own study, especially the connection to Aotearoa/New Zealand’s bicultural roots.

Women may feel mothering guilt when they compare themselves to other women who society presents as ‘good’ mothers. Because of this, they may fear judgment if they deviate from this societal ideal (Sutherland, 2010; Yüce-Selvi & Kantaş, 2019). Sutherland (2010) explains that

this realm of mothering guilt occurs on a meso-level, due to the impact that community has on mothers feeling guilt. Much of the past and present literature on mothering guilt pays particular attention to intensive mothering as the societal norm for 'good' mothering (Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Guendouzi, 2006; Henderson et al., 2015; Liss et al., 2013; Sutherland, 2010). This shows that the guilt that women feel in terms of comparing themselves to intensive mothering standards, also has not changed over time. These prescribed "rules" on how to be a good mother include women being the main caregivers of their children, and women putting their child's needs above their own (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Henderson et al. (2015) found in their study that feeling guilt and the pressure on women to be 'good' mothers, is "detrimental for mothers regardless of whether or not they subscribe to intensive motherhood ideologies" (p. 512).

Studies have also confirmed that working mothers are still widely criticised for not staying at home to care for their children, even though more women are participating in the labour force than in the past (Arendell, 2000; Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Lamar et al., 2019; Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). Guendouzi (2006) contributes the idea that working mothers may feel guilty if their children behave badly as a result of their working, stating that "a working mother = a failed child" (p. 904). Dillaway and Paré (2008) make the point that due to the societal construction of the stay-at-home mother, "we make the leap to assuming that mothering must take place within the home" (p. 459). Liss et al. (2013) also found in their study that the "fear of being evaluated and judged negatively by others" in their social circles contributed to a heightened sense of guilt and shame for mothers (p. 1113). These examples show that women are cast aside as 'bad' mothers by society and are made to feel guilty if they deviate from the 'good' mothering norm of staying at home with their children.

Viewed from the other side of the argument, Liss et al. (2013) found in their study that stay-at-home mothers feel mothering guilt just as strongly as working mothers. In their study, they surveyed 181 mothers with children under 5 years of age, to measure "guilt, shame, fear of negative evaluation, and maternal self-discrepancies" of the women (Liss et al., 2013, p. 1112). This is an interesting finding, as much of the literature indicates that stay-at-home mothers are generally favoured over working mothers by society (Arendell, 2000; Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Odenweller & Rittenour, 2017). This is because they are doing the 'right' thing by staying at home with their children, according to society, so they should technically have no need to feel guilt. However, Rubin and Wooten (2007) found in their study that stay-at-home mothers felt "guilt for not working and making use of their education and skills" and also felt that they were not living up to their potential (p. 341). Furthermore, the women in Rubin and Wooten's

(2007) study described their discomfort with being “just a mum,” and wanted to ensure others knew they “were professionals” before, as they were conflicted by the shame they felt by “not feeling adequate” in their stay-at-home mother role (p. 341). This shows how oppressive the “rules” of mothering structures are for both stay-at-home mothers and working mothers, and how recreating these “rules” in a process of structuration would be beneficial for all mothers (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Within my research, I want to locate these moments where the women talk to their experience of guilt and evaluate how this impacts their lives as working mothers (see Chapter 6).

### **Defining employment structures**

Structures surrounding employment have different “sets of rules and resources” (Giddens, 1984, p. 184) for women than they do for men. This puts limits on the ability of women to act agentically, due to the constraining features of employment structures. Employment structures that marginalise women include: the characteristics of the ‘ideal’ worker (Acker, 1992; Acker, 2012; Bierema, 2016; Cha, 2013; Reid, 2015); the double bind (Catalyst, 2007; Duffy & Pruchniewska, 2017; Shapiro et al., 2008); and the motherhood wage penalty (Andersen, 2018; Budig & England, 2001; Correll et al., 2007; Sin et al., 2018).

The concept of the ‘ideal’ worker was pioneered by Acker (1992), an influential feminist scholar known for her work regarding gender and organisations. She stated that work is organised on the “model of the unencumbered (white) man, and both men and women are expected to perform according to this model” (Acker, 2006, p. 450). The ‘ideal’ worker prioritises work over family and personal needs, is expected to work long hours if requested, and is completely devoted to their work (Acker, 1992; Bierema, 2016; Reid, 2015). Acker (2012) points out that men are more likely to fit the mould of the ideal worker. The enduring gendered structures of organisations cause men to be perceived as “real workers,” as traditionally women take on the unpaid work which allows men to be unencumbered with no commitments other than work (Acker, 2012, p. 218). As a result, the ideal worker model benefits men and marginalises women, especially mothers, as this ‘ideal’ worker role contradicts with what is expected of the ‘ideal’ mother (Bierema, 2016; Cha, 2013). Women are required to “work twice as hard for half as much,” when the highly gendered structures of organisations limit their agency and patriarchal ideals work against them (Bierema, 2016, p. 120).

Furthermore, constraining gendered structures in the workplace, such as the characteristics of the ideal worker, cause women to experience the dilemma of the double bind (Bierema, 2016). This is an impasse where women are “damned if [they] do, doomed if [they don’t],” no matter how they behave in the workplace (Catalyst, 2007, p. 1). This is even more apparent for women in leadership positions (Bierema, 2016; Catalyst, 2007). If a woman conveys qualities that are considered traditionally feminine, her competence is called into question, whereas on the other hand, if she displays conventionally masculine qualities, she may be judged or disliked (Duffy & Pruchniewska, 2017; Shapiro et al., 2008). An example of this is that leadership qualities that may be seen as positives for men, cause women to be described as “bossy, domineering, arrogant” and “self-promoting” (Black et al., 2019, p. 40). Further, the stresses of the double bind causes “needless self-monitoring” among women who strive to act feminine, while portraying qualities based off a male model, consequently depleting energy from important tasks at hand (Oakley, 2000, p. 325). These contradictory “rules” of employment structures (Giddens, 1984, p. 184) are unfair and oppressive to women, as the same rules do not apply to men.

The gender wage gap is a major concern in employment structures, and scholars have said that this can be partly explained by the motherhood penalty (Andersen, 2018; Kelley et al., 2020). The motherhood penalty is the discrimination that women experience in their careers when they become mothers (Budig & England, 2001; Correll et al., 2007). This may be through a drop in wages, questioning of women’s competence due to their time out of the workforce, and diminished career prospects and opportunities (Budig & England; Correll et al., 2007). Andersen (2018) explains that the structure of family friendly policies may reinforce the motherhood penalty, as it promotes the mother as the primary caregiver. Further, England et al., (2016) discovered in their analysis of panel data of US women that among white women, the women with high skills and wages received the highest motherhood wage penalties, losing 10 percent in wages per child. The motherhood penalty is a very real situation for Aotearoa/New Zealand women, who experience a 4.4 percent decrease in hourly wages when they become mothers (Sin et al., 2018). This situation is even more dire for Aotearoa/New Zealand women who take longer than 12 months to return to the workforce after having children, as the average decrease in wages is 8.3 percent (Sin et al., 2018).

### **When mothering and employment structures conflict with each other**

When the “rules and resources” (Giddens, 1984, p. 184) of both mothering and employment structures combine, they become even more constraining for women. This is because

mothering rules such as putting a child's needs first do not coincide with employment structural rules like working long hours, and keeping work separate from family (Giddens, 1984).

For women, the process of working towards achieving management roles may coincide with having children, causing women to make sacrifices that their male counterparts aren't required to make (Fondas, 1995; Kelan, 2014; Schwartz, 1989). Further to this, as mentioned previously, women experience a motherhood penalty when they return to the workforce after maternity leave, including a drop in wages, and questioning of professional experience due to the perceived disruption in their career development (Budig & England, 2001; Correll et al., 2007). Furthermore, Budig and England (2001) note that a penalty in wages can be attributed to "employment breaks, part-time employment, and the accumulation of fewer years of experience and seniority" (p. 219). Men on the other hand, are rewarded when they become fathers. Men can experience a "fatherhood premium" when they have children, and being a father is not seen to be incompatible with being an ideal worker, as it is for mothers (Correll et al., 2007, p. 1307). Rich (1986) adds a gendered perspective to Giddens' (1984) on why these structures are so constraining for women. She explains that the "institution," a patriarchal structure that ensures that women "remain under male control," is oppressive, as women are marginalised if they deviate outside the ideals of the institution (Rich, 1986, p. 13). This is reflected through women being marginalised as mothers, while men are rewarded as fathers in employment structures.

As well as the expectation of being a 'good' mother, women are societally expected to be 'good' workers that work long hours, are always available, and will prioritise work over personal needs (Bierema, 2016; Reid, 2015). This is especially relevant to the Aotearoa/New Zealand context. In Aotearoa/New Zealand society, these conflicting expectations make it increasingly difficult for women to decide 'when' or 'if' they will return to the workforce after having children. Giddens (1984) explains that structures can be constraining to people's social practices in the way they "restrict or deny" other possibilities of action (p. 173). Hays (1994) offers a way to look at Giddens through a gendered lens through gender stratification, as outlined previously. She explains how gender stratification can constrain people to "act in certain ways" in accordance to their place in the social hierarchy, while simultaneously, giving people a "sense of identity" (Hays, 1994, p. 61). This is often the case for women, as it is often decided by society that women are the "better and preferred" caregivers as they are "more attuned to the baby's needs," due to factors such as "hormones," and "maternal instinct" (Kahu & Morgan, 2007b). From this perspective, the need to be a 'good' mother is central to a



woman's identity and expected by Aotearoa/New Zealand society, meaning that many women feel compelled to stay at home. Conversely, being a 'good' worker and participating in the public sphere is valued more in society than mothering, as value is attributed to what is done for money (Kahu & Morgan, 2007b). On top of this conundrum, is the fact that the option of staying at home as the primary caregiver is not economically viable for many women in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Women, therefore, feel guilty as a result of this conflict between employment and mothering structures. Zappert (2001) summarises mothering guilt in terms of the conflicting interests of the separate sites of the household and the workplace:

If we focus on our children and families, we (and others) may fault us for our inability or unwillingness to be wholeheartedly dedicated to our careers. On the other hand, if we feel some measure of dedication to our professional lives, then profound concerns arise as to our willingness, or our ability, to be there for our families (Zappert, 2001, p. 61).

This finding confirms the constant internalised guilt that many working mothers deal with if they feel they are not giving their all to their children or their careers (Bailey, 2000; Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Hays, 1996; Peterson et al., 2018). Bailey (2000) found that even though the household and the workplace have long been conceptualised as two separate sites, "the relationship between these structures is complex," as working mothers negotiate their identities at work and as mothers (p. 54). Dillaway and Paré (2008) build on this observation, stating that motherhood and paid work are "intimately and permanently intertwined," and mothers "simultaneously" maintain activities regarding both, constantly "negotiating the boundaries of each" (p. 459). Hays (1996) points out that women spend significantly more time worrying about their children than their male partners do. Hays (1996) uses the term, "the guilt gap" to describe this injustice that women face, as they tend to experience higher levels of parental guilt than their male partners. This shows that even if men take on more of a role in the home, there is still a discrepancy between women and men in terms of these conflicting feelings of guilt. Again, through a gendered lens, this shows how the patriarchal structure of the institution privileges men, and marginalises women (Rich, 1986).

Another constraining factor concerning mothering and employment structures conflicting with each other is the tiresome balancing act of work and family responsibilities, as mentioned above. Fondas (1995) argues that the "feminine mystique," which concerned the generation of women in the 50s and 60s "whose identity was wholly tied to their husbands and children,"

has been replaced by the “work-family mystique” (p. 61). The work-family mystique is the “deeper realization” of the “costs, trade-offs, and values” of a society devoted to the balance of work and family (Fondas, 1995, p. 62). This shows that there is a breaking point for women who begin to question the principles behind a life of constantly negotiating between being a ‘good’ mother and a ‘good’ leader or worker. Fondas (1995) poses the question: “Is balance a goal worthy of our most talented citizens?” (p. 62). Perhaps it is more admirable for women to use their agency to act independently of mothering and employment structures, to have more family time or to dedicate time towards career projects. This is an example of empowered mothering, where women can mother on their own terms from a “position of agency, authority, authenticity, and autonomy” (O’ Reilly, 2008, p. 7). In my research, I endeavour to explore the ways in which the women experience conflict between their family and their careers, and how they manage that conflict.

### **In conclusion**

This thesis aims to explore how women navigate their work and family responsibilities within mothering and employment structures. Through incorporating theory by Giddens (1979; 1982; 1984; 1993) regarding structure and agency, I have been able to offer a conceptual framework that allows me to analyse how mothering and employment structures affect women’s identities and can limit their agency and decision-making as both mothers and workers. Additionally, I argue that when employment and mothering structures combine, it results in women’s agency being even more limited within these structures. Through adopting Giddens’ theory of structuration (1984; 1993) and key feminist understandings of the structural conditions of mothering (Rich, 1986; Hays, 1996; O’Reilly, 2016; Green, 2019), I am interested to identify how women could use their agency to shift oppressive structures over time so they can balance work and family easier. Therefore, instead of women being constrained by mothering and employment structures, they could feel enabled within these structures (Giddens, 1984) to mother and work simultaneously without feeling guilt. As a result, it will be easier for women to fulfil successful careers, while mothering on their own terms.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Research Methodology and Methods

This chapter outlines the methodological approaches I used for my research, and the methods I employed during my fieldwork. Because this thesis examined the ways in which women managed their work and family responsibilities, feminist research methodologies and methods were core to my fieldwork design (DeVault & Gross, 2012; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Olesen, 2011; O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012). In this chapter, I will discuss the reasoning behind the specific methodologies and methods used and describe each step of the research process including ethical considerations, recruiting participants, data collection, and data analysis.

#### Research Methodology

My research is centred around the experiences of women who are mothers in paid employment. To best understand and analyse the experiences of these women, I ensured my methodological approaches came from feminist qualitative research (DeVault & Gross, 2012; Hesse-Biber, 2012; Olesen, 2011; O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012). This section outlines the reasons for using a feminist qualitative research methodology, how it has been appropriate for guiding my research, and how it has influenced my data analysis.

#### Feminist methodologies

Using a feminist methodology has ensured my research contributes to feminist scholarship and identifies the “importance of women’s lived experiences,” revealing “subjugated knowledge” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 3). There are various feminist methodologies encompassing “multiple feminist lenses” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 4) to bring forward “understandings and solutions” that are more comprehensive than methodologies and epistemologies traditionally used (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 5). In the past, traditional research methodologies and epistemologies have given “disproportionate honor, authority, and power to men,” while simultaneously marginalising women and other oppressed groups (Jaggar, 2008, p. vii). These more traditional methodologies are examples of androcentric bias, which is defined as the tendency to centre “society around men and men’s needs, priorities, and values and to relegate women to the periphery” (Bailey et al., 2018, p. 307). Furthermore, androcentric bias has the tendency to position men as the “gender-neutral standard,” while positioning women as “gender-specific” (Bailey et al., 2018, p. 307). Therefore, feminist methodologies ensure androcentric bias is

eliminated in research. This is achieved through being “mindful of power and authority in the research process” (p. 4), “asking new questions,” and enabling “women’s experiences and perspectives to gain a hearing” in research design.

Specifically, my research adopts a feminist standpoint epistemology, which privileges “feminist research [that is] grounded in the experience of the oppressed” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 11). Feminist standpoint theory argues that women’s experiences create “a vantage point which can ground a powerful critique” of androcentric bias and patriarchal structures (Hartstock, 1987). This is optimal for generating knowledge that maximises objectivity, as the experiences of marginalised people provide “significant problems to be explained or research agendas” (Harding, 1992, p. 443). For these reasons, it has been argued that a feminist standpoint provides “fuller insights into society as a whole” (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 11).

These standpoint approaches provide the means to maximise “strong objectivity” in research (Harding, 1992, p. 458). Traditional concepts of objectivity are centred around the “context of justification” in research (Harding, 1992, p. 459), which focuses on how research methods are carried out and ensuring the process is value-free (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Strong objectivity comes into play when the researcher takes into account the “context of discovery,” where problems are identified as suitable for investigation and accurate hypotheses are formed (Harding, 1992, p. 459). Deeper meaning is derived when the social situation around the problem is identified and understood at the beginning of the research process. This ensures the subject of knowledge is “placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge” (Harding, 1992, p. 458).

Another important feature of objective feminist research is researcher reflexive practice (Hesse-Biber, 2012; O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012). Feminist researchers tend to pay close attention to positionality and reflexivity in research practice, to be mindful of how our own agendas can potentially influence any stage of research (Hesse-Biber, 2012). Using a reflexive methodology enables the researcher to eliminate power structures and build relationships to co-construct knowledge and draw deeper meaning (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012). Therefore, practicing reflexivity enables researchers to be mindful of how their “lived reality and experiences” (Hesse-Biber, 2007, p. 129), as well as their “social background, location, and assumptions” could potentially affect their research (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 17).

### Self-reflexive statement

I am a Pakeha, 24-year-old female. I grew up in a tight-knit community in Raumati Beach, Kāpiti Coast and was raised by two working parents. Growing up in a dual-career household taught my brother and I how to be independent and that a strong work ethic will get you far in life. I have always known my parents to be equal in their contributions towards the household. Both my parents support my brother and I in following our passions, never pressuring us to go down a certain career path. My mother, originally a resource management planner, re-trained as a teacher after I was born, and still claims she is unsure what she wants to be when she 'grows up.' Reassured by my mother's example, my brother pursued his passion for music, graduating with a music degree, playing in five bands, and teaching and producing music. I have followed my passion for communication, pursuing my master's degree and gaining work experience in the communications industry. Throughout my upbringing, I have never felt as if anything was out of reach and feel privileged in this respect.

I have always been inspired by the strong women in my life. During my high school years, I recognised the importance of feminism, as many of my female role models began to speak more openly about it. Additionally, having strong female role models growing up, such as my mother and Emma Watson (actress known for her gender equality activism and UN campaign 'HeForShe'), and trying my hand at leadership roles during my university years spurred my interest toward women in leadership positions. Recently, I was shocked to discover that the proportion of women in senior leadership positions is 18 percent in Aotearoa/New Zealand (its lowest point since 2004) (Fletcher, 2018). It also sparked my curiosity as to why this could be and motivated me to dig deeper as to why there are still gender inequality issues such as this present in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Additionally, witnessing my mother raising us while working full-time, and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern raising her baby while running the country, provoked a question within me: "How can women pursue their careers and be mothers?" This drove me in my pursuit to discover how women as working mothers navigate their day-to-day lives, and how their insights could potentially help other women balance work and family. Additionally, for personal reasons, this will help me make choices when I eventually decide to have children.

I started this project wanting to understand why there is only a small percentage of women in top leadership positions. However, when the focus of my study shifted, I wanted to grasp how women negotiate their work and family responsibilities – regardless of their leadership experiences – to determine the ways in which their lives could be more manageable. In turn,

this knowledge could help pave the way for other women aspiring to be both mothers and lead successful careers. My research standpoint is what I came to know: that gendered structures can inform women's decision making and identities as mothers and workers. Through a feminist lens, I see that gendered structures have the potential to constrain women (Giddens, 1984), and they can also serve to benefit men. Through this research, I have explored how women operate within these structures, and alternatively, how they use their agency to evolve the structures in which they operate (Giddens, 1984).

### **Consideration of ethical issues**

As stated by Keegan (2009), "the welfare of research participants and the confidentiality of participant data" have been long established in ethics for qualitative practice globally. To ensure I maintained a high ethical standard for my research, I followed the ethical principles administered by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC). I was granted ethical approval by AUTEC on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018. This approval proved that I upheld a "feminist ethics of care," which is an important factor of using a feminist methodological approach, as it privileges "emotionality" and avoids "exploitation" (Allan, 2012, p. 99).

To ensure the women in my study had sufficient information and were aware of their rights within the research process, I sent them the indicative interview questions (see Appendix C), Consent Form (see Appendix B), and Participation Information Sheet in advance via email (see Appendix A). The Participant Information Sheet outlined the research's purpose, the research process, how the women's privacy will be protected, and the women's rights to turn off the recorder at any point or withdraw from the study any time. Two of the participants scanned and returned their Consent Forms back to me via email, with the other participants signing their Consent Form at the time of their interview. Prior to commencing the interview, I provided each participant with an explanation of the project and gave them sufficient time to review the Participant Information Sheet and sign the Consent Form if they hadn't already done so. After the interview, I asked each participant if they would like to see the transcript, once I had completed it. Only one participant took me up on this offer and made minor changes to her transcript.

To respect the privacy and the confidentiality of the participants, I took great care in the handling of the interview data. First of all, in the Consent Form, I stated that pseudonyms would be used unless the participant explicitly expressed their consent for their name to be

used. To differentiate between Pakeha and Māori ethnicities, I specifically chose a Māori name for the woman of this ethnicity. Further to this, I anonymised the names of the women's children, colleagues, family members, and organisations to protect them with limited confidentiality. Secondly, all of the transcripts were typed out by me on my own personal computer in a private location, with the use of headphones. I never left the transcription documents unattended and stored them on my portable hard drive which was stored in a secure location at my home. Further, I did not discuss anything regarding the participants and the data collected with anyone other than my supervisor, Christina Vogels, who needed to review the data for analysis purposes only. It was important that I took these measures to protect the privacy of the participants, as they trusted me with their personal stories and experiences.

### **Recruitment and participants**

The criteria for selecting the participants were that the women had to be in a leadership role within their organisation and had to currently have a child or children aged 10 years old or under. The reasoning behind the age of the children was that it allowed a shorter timeframe for the women to recall the details of having their children while in leadership positions or building their careers towards their current role. Additionally, I specified the leadership roles the women were in as being vital in order to run the organisation and to contribute to the organisation's vision. This was due to the initial focus of my research that then shifted once I began my fieldwork (see page 6-7 of Introduction). Furthermore, I stated that these women may ultimately have influence within their field of expertise in Aotearoa/New Zealand. My goal when recruiting participants was to select a diverse mix of participants, ensuring they worked in different fields (e.g. government, non-profit, and corporate) and in different regions around Aotearoa/New Zealand.

To recruit the participants, I reached out to my personal networks, and relied on snowballing sampling via their professional networks so they could then refer me to women who could be suitable for my research. Resulting from this process, I gained six participants who were willing to participate in one-on-one interviews. They work in a range of fields including government, consulting, human resources, non-profit, and corporate, and in a range of locations including Auckland, Hawke's Bay, and Wellington.

Participant profiles

Danielle is from the UK originally, but has lived in New Zealand for over eight years. She lives with her partner and two children, aged four and two-and-a-half years old at the time I interviewed her. She works an approximate 40-hour week, sometimes more, and her paid working hours are spent both in the office, and at home.

Kahu is of Māori ethnicity. She is a single mother of her two children, aged 16 and ten years old at the time the interview was conducted. Her eldest child goes to boarding school. She works four and a half days a week at her current job to enable her to visit her eldest child who goes to boarding school.

Naomi's ethnicity is Pakeha, and she lives with her husband and their four children. Her children are aged 13, 11, nine, and 8 years of age at the time of the interview. She works long hours, often more than 60 hours per week.

Heather's ethnicity is also Pakeha. She lives with her husband and two children, aged 16 and ten years old at the time the interview was conducted. She often works more than 40 hours a week in her current role.

From the UK originally, Fiona has resided in New Zealand for over 15 years. She lives with her partner and two children, who at the time of the interview, were aged six and four years old. She works long hours, spending 40 hours a week present in the office for her staff, and additional hours every evening at home.

Stephanie is of Pakeha ethnicity, and lives with her husband and two children. At the time the interview was conducted, her children were seven and five years of age. She works around the hours that her children are at school, which is approximately 30 hours a week.

It must be noted that because of the high level of their positions, all of the women are in high pay grades.



## Methods

### Interviews

For this study, face to face, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the best method for data collection. I chose a semi-structured approach because I wanted to give the women “human agency” to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions as mothers and workers, therefore using their voice to help mobilise change for women and my recommendations for this project (Blee and Taylor, 2002, p. 96). Additionally, Blee and Taylor (2002) say semi-structured interviews provide a “greater breadth and depth of information” and access to the respondent’s “ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words” (p. 93). Also, although it was an in-depth interview guided by a series of open-ended questions, the participants were encouraged to share their stories/narratives around the questions. Prompting a narrative storytelling approach from the participants eased the process of thematic analysis which will be discussed in the next section. I decided that interviewing the women in person, face to face, was the best option. This way I could build trust and rapport with the participants and gain a more comprehensive understanding of their responses than if the interview was virtual. Further, being face to face showed the women were committed to participate and may have been more willing to give detailed answers to my questions.

Nine broad questions guided my interviews. These questions were planned ahead of time, and as previously mentioned, they were sent to the interviewees at least a week in advance, so the participants could think about their response prior to the interview. The questions I planned were open-ended (see Appendix C), as I wanted to guide the discussion, while also giving the women freedom to share their experiences with a high level of detail. Additionally, I asked follow-up questions to prompt the storytelling of the participants and clarifying questions to ensure I drew sufficient understanding of the women’s experiences. It was important I used open-ended questions as opposed to leading questions, which would have caused biased answers, and may have pushed interviewees to answer the questions in a particular way. Providing women with agency to share their experiences freely during the interview process shows why “open-ended and semi-structured interviewing” is “favored by feminist researchers” (DeVault & Gross, p. 209).

To begin the process, I asked my participants how their day was going, to frame the interview as conversational. I did this also to gain their trust, make them feel at ease, and to mitigate the power balance between researcher and participant. My opening questions were to

prompt the women to describe their experience of staying in or leaving the workforce to have their children, and how their choice was received in their business circles. Then, I proceeded to ask more tailored questions surrounding how they negotiated their work and family requirements and switched between their personal and professional networks. After these questions, I asked if being a mother helped the women become better leaders, and if their perceptions of certain situations had changed. Finally, I asked for their opinion regarding if they thought government and/or organisations should have a role in making it easier for mothers to retain leadership positions in the future.

The interviews ranged in duration from 20 minutes to an hour long, depending on the level of detail participants used in their answers, and the number of follow-up questions I asked. The locations agreed upon by the participant and myself were chosen based on convenience for the participants, and also needed to be as private and quiet as possible. Two participants travelled to Auckland for business, so we met at a café most convenient for them. I met three of the participants at their place of work, and the interviews took place in quiet meeting areas. For one participant, I travelled to her home in the Hawke's Bay to conduct the interview. Each interview was recorded via a voice recorder application on my phone. To end the process, participants were thanked for their time and effort and were given a small gift as *koha*<sup>7</sup>. I then transcribed each interview in full.

### Data analysis

During the transcribing process, it was important to me that I preserved the women's narratives. DeVault (1990) reinforces the importance of preserving women's speech, as often in the data collection process, features of women's talk go "typically unnoticed" (p. 105). Representations of talk that are "more complete" can put forward "a resource for analysis built on distinctive features of women's speech" (DeVault, 1990, p. 106). Furthermore, Riessman (1993) states that as "essential meaning-making structures, narratives must be preserved, not fractured, by investigators, who must respect respondents' ways of constructing meaning and analyze how it is accomplished" (p. 4). Keeping this in mind, I ensured the transcripts were kept as close to the original recording as possible, with only incomplete sentences and unnecessary repetition being edited.

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<sup>7</sup> *Koha* is a Māori word that can be translated as gift, donation, or contribution, and is used as a token of gratitude.

Following the transcription process, the next stage in my research was to draw significant connections from the data. I decided the best method of analysis to achieve this would be through conducting a thematic analysis, which is often seen as a subset of narrative analysis. Riessman (2008) articulates the role of a narrative analyst in interpreting qualitative data:

“Narrative analysts interrogate intention and language - *how* and *why* incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers. For whom was this story constructed, and for what purpose? Why is the succession of events configured this way? What cultural resources does the story draw on, or take for granted?” (p. 11).

Undertaking a thematic analysis involved me collecting the narratives – or stories – from the interviews to “inductively create conceptual groupings from the data,” organising them by theme (Riessman, 2005, p. 2). Riessman (2008) explains that a key feature of thematic analysis is that it is “case centered” (p. 74). This means the interviewee’s story remains “intact,” through “theorizing by case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases” (Riessman, 2008, p. 53). I ensured I conducted a case centred approach through analysing each woman’s narrative separately to avoid making generalised statements across the data, and to preserve each woman’s story (Riessman, 2011). Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, I was able to locate similarities and patterns within individual answers to the same questions across the transcripts. This proved to be an effective starting point for identifying the bigger picture across the transcripts, before I conducted a more thorough thematic analysis of the women’s narratives.

Additionally, Riessman (1993) emphasises that during data analysis, researchers must confront “representational decisions” in the “voices that we record and interpret” (p. 8). As a feminist researcher, I ensured I reviewed the data from a feminist standpoint, examining the women’s experiences through the ways their “language, talk, and discourse” were structured (DeVault & Gross, 2012, p. 217). This involved identifying the presence of gendered structures within the narratives, and how women were potentially constrained within these structures (Giddens, 1984).

When locating the broader themes from the transcripts, four groups of ideas surfaced initially: mothering guilt, support from others, tactics used to balance work and family, and organisational factors. Later on, I took these broad groups of ideas and coagulated them into three themes that became the titles of my data chapters: expectations vs. the reality of mothering; a working mother’s battle with guilt; and flexible working arrangements. Once I

had located the main themed narratives, I colour coded them in the transcripts, and created diagrams on paper to visually connect the similarities and patterns. Then, I conducted a second phase of analysis which included identifying moments in the transcripts where the women were either constrained by oppressive gendered structures, or if they showed moments of agency (Giddens, 1984). This allowed me to explore the deeper meaning behind the overarching themes through the way the women structured their answers in the interviews. As Riessman (1993) states, this form of narrative analysis is useful due to what it reveals about “social life” as “culture “speaks itself” through an individual’s story” (p. 5). Conducting a thematic analysis of the narratives from a feminist standpoint made it possible for me to identify deeper themes regarding unequal gender structures, that may have gone unnoticed in a more surface level analysis of the data.

### **In conclusion**

This chapter outlined how I conducted my fieldwork and the reasoning behind the methods I chose. I decided that using a qualitative approach through open and semi-structured interviews would be the best fit for my research, as it gave the women agency to openly share their stories and experiences (Blee & Taylor, 2002). Further, it was important to me that I preserved the women’s speech through transcribing the interviews, only making minor tweaks so the narratives flowed, and the women’s ways of constructing meaning were kept intact for the data analysis stage (Riessman, 1993). Using a thematic analysis to study the data allowed me to mindfully process the data, categorising themes, noticing the way the women structured their speech and identifying gendered structures within their narratives (Riessman, 2008). Also, conducting my research from a feminist standpoint worked in my favour, as it allowed me to draw deeper meaning from the women’s experiences. The following chapters will now show the discussions that resulted from my narrative analysis.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Expectations versus the reality of mothering

A recurrent theme (Riessman, 2008) identified in the interviews conducted for this project was a sense amongst the women that there was a gap between their prenatal expectations of motherhood versus their postnatal lived experiences of motherhood. This theme alludes to what scholars have discussed as a biological essentialist naturalisation of mothering (see Chapter 3, pages 25-26; see also DiQuinzio, 1999; Neyer and Bernardi, 2011; O'Reilly, 2016): an assumption that the particular qualities of an individual are an “innate and natural ‘essence,’” rather than a product of upbringing (Chandler & Munday, 2016, p. 13). As will be discussed further in this chapter, the naturalisation of mothering is a deeply ingrained structural feature of mothering and is constraining in ways that “restrict or deny” other possibilities of action for mothers (Giddens, 1984, p. 173).

#### Unrealistic expectations of mothering

As discussed by Stephanie, her expectations of motherhood, which she refers to as her ‘vision,’ were that it would be a flawless experience. This ‘vision’ of motherhood involved having a healthy child that slept, to ensure a smooth transition back into her regular work routine after maternity leave. However, this was not her postnatal experience:

Stephanie: I think you have this vision of how it’s all gonna be. Your kids are all gonna be perfect, they’re gonna sleep. Well, you don’t think you’re gonna be perfect, but you don’t know what you don’t know. So, the sleep deprivation, I got mastitis three times, I got chicken pox, I gave my son chicken pox when he was three months old, from doing a Pilates class. He had silent reflux, do you know? You look at the movies, and it all looks hunky dory, and the mum goes off to work and off she goes, and kids are cute, and they sleep and all the rest of it, and no! It doesn’t happen like that!

Heather had similar expectations to Stephanie, thinking that motherhood would go according to the ‘plan’ she had in mind before she had her baby.

Heather: Yeah, but it’s one of those things, you know, you think you’ve got a plan, and your life will go perfectly to it, and then nature intervenes and suddenly you’ve

got a premature infant that can't breathe on their own, and he had quite a few health problems in his first year.

Like Stephanie, Heather's 'vision' of motherhood was that her baby would be healthy and easy to manage, which would ensure a smooth transition back to work. In contrast, the postnatal reality of having a baby with health problems was very different from what Stephanie and Heather thought motherhood would be like. For Heather, this was even more disparate due to her having a premature baby with significant health issues.

Stephanie and Heather's word choice - "perfect" – could speak to their disposition towards what they thought motherhood should look like. These unrealistic expectations of perfection in motherhood could potentially stem from how society defines a 'good' mother: a woman who is selfless, stays at home with her children, and is visibly committed to her mothering role (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002). A prominent ideology of what constitutes a 'good' mother, as mentioned in the literature review (see Chapter 2), pertains to intensive mothering practices (Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Lee, 2008; Wall, 2010). This is where the mother is devoted to her child's needs, and prioritises them over her own (Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2006). As discussed in Chapter 3, intensive mothering is an example of a constraining structure (Giddens, 1984), as it limits the social practices of mothers and pressures them to act in line with what society constitutes as 'good' mothering. Furthermore, this perfection-oriented mindset is likely influenced by these "rules" of oppressive mothering structures that suggest that women must prioritise their child's needs above everything else (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). This sets mothers up for disappointment, when they struggle to meet these unrealistic expectations.

Stephanie described a situation where the assumption of the naturalisation of mothering informed her experiences of being a first-time mother. As her husband travelled a lot for work, Stephanie had taken on the majority of parenting responsibilities that came with caring for a newborn baby. This proved challenging as she also juggled this role with being a business owner as well. Stephanie described a situation where she felt particularly overwhelmed when her husband had to travel for work, and she carried the responsibility of caring for their newborn baby son on her own:

Stephanie: And, you know, I can remember [my husband] went back to work and he started a new job, and he was four days a week down in Wellington at that stage, which was more than he had been. And [Child 1] was a month old. I

can remember he left for the early flight and I just cried, I just thought, “Oh my god, this is it, we’re on our own and I don’t know what I’m doing!”

Stephanie’s feeling of “oh my god this is it,” showed the overwhelming moment of realisation that she was carrying the responsibility of caring for a newborn baby on her own. Caring for a newborn makes up one of the hardest parts of parenthood (Corkin et al., 2018; Nelson et al., 2014), meaning it can be even more difficult for mothers doing it on their own. This was especially difficult for Stephanie as she was a first-time mother at the time. Even if women are new mothers, it is expected that they will naturally take on the mothering role (Chandler & Munday, 2016; Neyer & Bernardi, 2011; see Chapter 3). Again, the overarching belief that mothering is based on natural instinct surfaces. In terms of mothering, biological essentialist notions can inform women’s prenatal expectations. These include the expectation that their bodies are naturally “designed to reproduce,” they will be able to give birth naturally, and they will be able to intuitively fulfil their children’s needs (Miller, 2007, p. 340). As a strong structural feature of *how to mother*, this is very constraining for women, especially since the structural rules (that expect women to intuitively know how to mother because of their biological makeup) have been reproduced for centuries. As discussed in Chapter 3, research shows how new mothers often put their trust in the gendered expectation that they will be able to intuitively and naturally fulfil their children’s needs (Miller, 2007). This can bring about a sense of failure and feeling overwhelmed when mothering doesn’t come as naturally as they hoped. Additionally, it can make it difficult for women to escape the context of “moral self-monitoring” that comes with the pressure to be a ‘good’ mother (Ribbens, 1998, p. 37). This was how Stephanie felt when she was left alone as a new mother when she said, “I don’t know what I’m doing!”

Research suggests that when women are unrealistically optimistic in their expectations about motherhood during pregnancy, they are more likely to struggle to adjust psychologically if their reality is more challenging than they anticipated (Harwood et al., 2007). This can result in women feeling like a failure when they do not live up to the standard of what they thought mothering *should* look like. Feeling like a failure as a mother can cause women to feel “powerless,” resulting from their sense of agency being diminished as the realities of motherhood take hold (Young, 2008, p. 52). Rich (1977) discusses these unrealistic expectations of motherhood as stemming from a “powerless responsibility,” which denies mothers the agency to dictate their own mothering experience (as cited in O’Reilly, 2010, p. 370). This sense of “powerless responsibility” (Rich, 1977, as cited in O’Reilly, 2010, p. 370)

came up when Heather talked about not feeling she was meeting the expectations of work or family:

Heather: No one gets your best. Your work doesn't get your best, and your kids don't get your best.

Shannon: Yep. That's hard.

Heather: Yeah. Be prepared to be just a little bit average at both.

Here, Heather framed herself as an "average" mother and worker and accepted this as her reality. She expressed that she would never be the 'good' mother that society expects her to be. Due to her demanding job, Heather simply did not have the time to provide her children with undivided attention, and prioritise their every need above her own, like the intensive mother (Hays, 1996). This could likely lead to her feeling this sense of powerlessness that Rich (1977 as cited in O'Reilly, 2010) discusses, as her lived experience did not align with her 'perfect' plan she hoped for before she had her children.

A reason why these pressures to be 'good' and 'natural' mothers are so deeply ingrained in society, is because social systems have reproduced the rules – or expectations – of these structures for centuries (Giddens, 1993; see Chapter 3). Historically, patriarchal structures treated men as equal and women were "relegated to nature," with childbearing and motherhood being their "natural responsibility" (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165). These outdated structural features of mothering that presume that women should first and foremost be primary caregivers, have been reproduced into the rules of today's society, a completely different landscape, where women not only mother, but also actively pursue their own careers. Therefore, unrealistic expectations of motherhood can have oppressive ramifications for women when their postnatal realities and fast-paced, dynamic lifestyles as working mothers do not align.

### **Gendered expectations of mothering**

Expectations of 'good' mothering are, of course, highly gendered. Due to continued patriarchal divisions of labour within the home, women are still often placed with the primary responsibility of raising children, which further feeds the societal expectation that women should be natural mothers (Glenn, 1994; Elizabeth, 2017). In Aotearoa/New Zealand, for



example, research has found that mothers are more highly involved with caring for their children compared to their male partners (Stats NZ, 2013). This 2013 study found that male partners caring for their children without the mother present only accounted for around 10 percent of total caring time (Stats NZ, 2013). As discussed in Chapter 3, this essentialist assumption that mothering is ‘natural’ can be oppressing for women, as it assumes that structures regarding mothering cannot be changed (DiQuinzio, 1999), and that childrearing responsibilities are a woman’s “natural responsibility” (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165).

Nicole reflected on how men can benefit and how women can be oppressed by social constructions of mothering:

Nicole: Look, I would say that society has been set up on a male model. What I mean by that, it’s not a male as in, negative. It’s a model where the primary breadwinner goes to work and works all day and then the wife supports them, and everything’s done for them in terms of looking after the kids, making dinner etc, and that’s actually, with many working women, not how it works. So, I have worked with a number of CEO and senior working men and many go off and take recreational time, playing golf, going to the rugby, having time to themselves on the weekend. While that may not be the experience for working CEs and mums like me where we spend our weekends looking after the kids, making dinner and meals to give our partners a break - so that’s not how it works for me!

I actually do most of the meals on the weekend, I look after lots of the school sports on the weekend and I do a lot of the household jobs over the weekend – washing for example. So the traditional model of work when I talk about my situation, because it will be different for each woman, completely different, and it’s a completely different expectation, with a full work week and a full weekend and many evenings looking after family and home commitments, which is demanding - I don’t think everybody can operate like I operate, it’s just not possible.

As a female CEO, Nicole did not fit into this “male model”: her lived experience as a working mother meant that she worked long hours during the week, so could not afford to take on most of the family responsibilities from Monday to Friday. Her partner worked part-time, so he was able to take on all childcare duties during Nicole’s working hours. She explained,

however, that during the evenings and on weekends she picked up family responsibilities. This was unlike what she had seen happen for some “CEO and senior working men [counterparts]” who “go off and take recreational time, playing golf, going to the rugby, having time to themselves on the weekend.” Nicole said her partner was happy to share roles, but she felt the expectation to be there for him and the kids in a different way to her male colleagues. These essentialist assumptions – that position women as needing to pick up all or most of the family duties when they are not at work – are acutely oppressive (Young, 2008). This is because they exploit women by requiring them to perform the majority of childrearing and domestic responsibilities, often without credit from or being reciprocated by their male partners (Young, 2008). Ultimately women’s power is transferred to men, giving men the credit and elevating their status as a result (Young, 2008). This affirms that the “rules and resources” of the gendered, patriarchal structures of the family that expect women to take on most of the childcare responsibilities tend to benefit men over women (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). As mentioned in Chapter 3, this structure separates women and men, with women assuming the role of “affective nurturing, mainly mothering,” and men assuming the role of “economic providing” (Collins, 1994, p. 46). An example of this is when Nicole referred to the CEO working men who “go off and take recreational time,” leaving their wives to look after the children. These men got the power of the CEO status, without having to take on their family responsibilities in their spare time, like Nicole did. This shows that there is still an unequal division of labour in the home.

Women being the default caregivers of their children continues to be a social phenomenon. The Time Use survey conducted by Stats NZ (2011), showed that Aotearoa/New Zealand women spent 4 hours and 20 minutes a day on unpaid work on average. Aotearoa/New Zealand men spent significantly less time on unpaid work, completing 2 hours and 32 minutes a day (Stats NZ, 2011). This is hugely exploitative, as women are encouraged to enter the workforce after having children to contribute towards household income, while they are also expected to complete unpaid domestic duties as well. This illustrates how women often work what is known as a ‘double day’ or a ‘second shift’ (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2020; Firestone & Shelton, 1994; Hochschild, 2012; Wharton, 1994; see Chapter 2).

Interestingly, a couple of the women in my study indicated that although they worked full-time, they were expected to take on the primary parenting role, explaining that they felt like the default caregiver of their children. This is an interesting contradiction: while women expect fathers to be more equally involved nowadays (Gregory & Milner, 2011), many still believe that mothers are naturally responsible for the children, causing fathers to take a step

back in their parenting role. In a US study that analysed which partner was most likely to miss work when urgent childcare was required, results showed that there was a higher chance of women missing work to care for their children (Maume, 2008). For equal parenting to become a reality, both partners must make “symmetrical adjustments” so that they can both combine work and family simultaneously to create a “different model of family and professional life” (Deutsch, 1999, p. 233). However, challenging the gendered expectations and structures of parenting proves difficult, as they are so deeply ingrained into society (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2005).

Fiona stated a downside of this when her husband found time for activities that she couldn't find the time for as the default caregiver.

Fiona: I still feel like I'm the default caregiver. It amazes me how my partner has the time to get out for a run, read lots of books and watch a lot of series on Netflix. He always seems to find that time.

This narrative shows that as a default caregiver who is working full time in a CEO position, Fiona was not left with time for leisure activities like her partner seemingly “always” had time for. Her use of the word “amazes” shows that she was perplexed that he could fit these leisure activities into his day, when she struggled to find time for herself. What's more, it is likely that Fiona's partner felt *entitled* to fit these leisure activities into his day. This kind of entitlement is highly exploitive (Young, 2008), as Fiona's partner appeared to have felt that his leisure time was a priority. This means that there was possibly an expectation that he would benefit from Fiona completing an unequal share of parenting in return for his daily leisure time. Further to this, I suggest that the entitlement Fiona's husband appeared to have had, could have come from structural elements that speak to gendered rules around caregiving, that suggest that it is a woman's work (Giddens, 1984; Wharton, 1994; see Chapter 3). As a result, he participated in leisure activities with the assumption that Fiona had the childcare responsibilities under control, which suggests that he perceived it as her “natural responsibility” (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165).

These types of structural expectations are seen in other family arrangements. For example, Nicole's husband was a stay-at-home father. However, this factor did not relieve her from family responsibilities, as she took them on before and after working hours and on the weekends. Even though Nicole was the main breadwinner of the household, the double day still affected her, as she took over family responsibilities from her husband in her available

time, with not much time left to regenerate. Nicole framed her work and childcare responsibilities as both “jobs,” and described her busy week:

Nicole: I think you’re always a little bit, trying to balance your own health and wellbeing in the middle of it, cause it is really busy, you’re doing 60-70, in my case now probably 70 hour a week job, and sometimes more, and um, you know, then all my weekends are kid stuff, and every Friday night, and quite a few of the other nights of the week I’ve got other things on, so you probably, you know, if you say they’re both jobs, I’m working a 100 hour week, with not a lot time for yourself, so I do think you have to find for yourself.

Stephanie had a similar situation, when she described her evening routine after work, and her morning routine before work to fit in her household chores:

Shannon: ...Mum’s don’t stop, that’s a 24/7 job.

Stephanie: Yeah! It absolutely is, and I think working mums on top of that, you know you get home and, even tonight, I probably won’t stop properly until about half-past eight, nine. Because, you know...actually, tonight might be slightly earlier to be honest because I can do the washing slightly earlier, but you know, folding the washing, tidying up, getting the bags all ready for tomorrow, getting the lunch boxes partly set for tomorrow, doing all the dishes, getting the washing in the washing machine so tomorrow morning I can hang it out first thing, you know. That’s my personality, I’m quite a tick-oriented, and I like to have everything in its place. Then, I used to start work!

In Kahu’s case, her partner at the time would infer that her work was often similar to leisure pursuits. For example, he would regard her work-related travel as a ‘holiday,’ meaning that she was pressured to start her ‘second shift’ of unpaid domestic duties immediately upon her return from these trips:

Kahu: Yeah, and then the other thing I found with the relationship is cause when you’re travelling for work, it is not a holiday! But your partner sometimes views it as a holiday, because you’re not home looking after the kids....So, their expectation when you come home is that, you know, they get a holiday!

Shannon: That you pick up the slack.

Kahu: Yeah. It's just work work work work work, you know.

Also, Kahu had the additional responsibility of caring for her grandmother. She was able to fulfil her responsibilities as a mother and a worker on a manageable level until her grandmother became sick and needed extra care. This unexpected turn of events made it even more difficult for Kahu to manage her daily responsibilities.

Kahu: So, what happens I find is that, you have a manageable level, so you can work at a high level, it's manageable, but the moment something new comes and falls in, it completely throws everything out.

Shannon: Yeah.

Kahu: And that becomes really difficult. So, when my grandmother got sick, I would go and I would do night shift, so look after her at night, and someone else would come and do day shift, and look after her during the day, so your sleep suffers, and now you've got to figure out how to manage your child, and do your job, and do all the things that you'd do, so it's often, whatever is your situation you can adapt, but it's when something disrupts it, it throws things right out.

These narratives show that these women were squeezing in domestic 'unpaid' duties before and after work to care for their families and ensure the household was running smoothly (Firestone & Shelton, 1994; Wharton, 1994). As mentioned earlier, there is the assumption that childcare is a woman's "natural responsibility" (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165), which feeds into social expectations for women to be seen to be "good" mothers (see Chapter 3, pages 25-26). Additionally, male partners may see mundane domestic duties as "women's work" due to their orientation towards a more traditional, gendered household structure (Wharton, 1994, p. 198). Furthermore, Glazer (1984) explains that unpaid domestic labour often done by women is required to maintain "the social reproduction of capitalism," to support their paid working partners (p. 63). The combination of these gendered expectations may make it difficult for women to stand up for themselves and ask their partners to do their equal share of childcare and domestic duties. Women may fear that the consequence of asking their partners to share the load may result in conflict due to their male partner feeling

they are being criticised, and possible derision from them and wider family members. These are examples of constraining structural rules (Giddens, 1984) which women are expected to follow that result in them taking on additional childcare and domestic responsibilities that put them at a disadvantage in comparison to their male partners.

Women like Kahu may have the additional responsibility of looking after their elders, which is argued to be more stressful than the hours spent on childcare (MacDonald et al., 2005), as elderly people may be less mobile, have underlying health conditions and require more emotional support. Originally, Kahu was experiencing a “role overload,” which is where she was managing multiple roles, as a mother and worker, and finding it challenging, but manageable, to find time to balance the two (Coverman, 1989, p. 967). However, when her grandmother got sick, she faced “role conflict,” which is when the demands of one role, makes it difficult to fulfil the demands of other roles (Coverman, 1989, p. 968). When women face role conflict, it can have a negative impact on mental health, due to their significantly larger workloads that come with the ‘second shift’ (Coverman, 1989; Hochschild, 2012).

The way Nicole described her work and family life as “jobs,” and Stephanie said she “won’t stop” until late in the evening, showed how little personal time these women had to themselves to focus on their own wellbeing and interests (MacDonald et al., 2005; Nomaguchi et al., 2005; Rose, 2017). The women I talked to described being constantly busy after work and on the weekends despite having demanding careers. An Australian study regarding working mother’s perceptions of time found that mothers who attempt to manage their time pressure through multitasking, ended up increasing their time pressure, as well as degrading the quality of time (Rose, 2017). On top of this, women who are time pressured lack the time to participate in “stress-reducing activities” such as leisure activities or exercise, forming a “Time Pressure Catch 22” (Rose, 2017, p. 127). Similarly, Nomaguchi et al. (2005) reported that mothers were more likely to “express a lack of time to spend on themselves” than fathers (p. 756). Additionally, research has found that women who completed additional hours of unpaid domestic duties while working paid hours had higher levels of time stress than men experiencing the same thing (MacDonald et al., 2005). This could be attributed to gendered expectations deferring more responsibility onto women over their male partners (MacDonald et al., 2005). It could have been that the women I talked to found it difficult to look after their health and wellbeing due to the intense time pressure they were under as women leading high level careers. This shows that mothering and employment structures are often in conflict with each other, and as a result, these women struggled to find quality time for themselves.

### Resisting 'good' mothering expectations

Opportunities arose at times for the women where they harnessed their agency and resisted some of these oppressive expectations of what mothering *should* look like (see Chapter 3, pages 23-29). A subtle way in which working mothers can resist 'good' mothering expectations, is through showing their own vulnerability. This pushes against oppressive "super woman," intensive mothering expectations that expect mothers to have everything sorted (Friedan, 1998, p. 206). These small-scale acts of resistance are the first step to re-writing oppressive discourses (Thomas & Davies, 2005), and creating a more realistic depiction of motherhood. Furthermore, showing vulnerability is an effective way of mothers who are leaders in their organisations to connect with their colleagues. Kahu described how she connected with her colleagues through showing her vulnerability and being open with them:

Kahu: It becomes that reciprocal approach. And what I've found over the years is, the more you can show your real life, you know, the juggling, to others, the more open they are about their own juggle with you. Whether they're Māori, whether they're not Māori, it doesn't matter. But a lot of the time, you're so busy pretending you've got everything sorted and everything under control, it's not real.

Shannon: Yep.

Kahu: The moment you kind of show your vulnerability, people show theirs, and then it helps you build, you know, strong relationships anyway, even in the workplace.

Kahu stated that the way she showed she was dealing with "real life" issues, and "juggling" work and family responsibilities in her organisation was an effective way of connecting with her colleagues, regardless of their culture. She described how those who were "busy pretending" they had "everything sorted and everything under control," weren't being "real" with themselves. Kahu felt a responsibility to resist becoming a leader who pretends she has "everything sorted." Instead, she allowed herself to be vulnerable. This, in turn, enabled her to be a more authentic leader, who was open with her colleagues, which helped her build strong relationships and create a high-trust work environment. For example, Kahu shared that she brought her children into the office and occasionally asked a team member to keep an eye on them in a meeting and said that she would do the same for them if they asked. This shows

the potential of how these small-scale acts of women using their agency can lead to positive change through a process of structuration (Giddens, 1984; Giddens, 1993; see Chapter 3). This will ensure mothering and employment structures can shift over time, in ways that can help women to feel enabled to negotiate work and family more easily within these structures.

The way Kahu disclosed her situation as a mother “juggling” her work and family responsibilities and revealed her vulnerability to her colleagues showed courage and resistance. Showing vulnerability in this way demonstrates a key attribute which the literature uses to describe transformational leadership (Avolio et al., 2004; Diddams & Chang, 2012). In addition to this, there are parallels drawn between transformational leadership and parenting (Popper & Maysel, 2002). In the same way as parents, leaders can form “emotional relationships” with their colleagues to help them “grow and develop as people” (Popper & Maysel, 2002, p. 42). Additionally, when leaders show “accountability, integrity, courage and transparency” in the workplace (Diddams & Chang, 2012, p. 594), their colleagues report higher levels of trust, and feel like they can identify with those who lead them (Avolio et al., 2004). Furthermore, the way Kahu showed her vulnerability is a method of resisting the patriarchal structures of mothering through the practice of empowered mothering (O’Reilly, 2008; see Chapter 3). O’Reilly (2008) explains that mothers and children benefit when women practice empowered mothering from a “position of agency, authority, authenticity, and autonomy” (p. 7).

### **In conclusion**

One of the significant findings that emerged from this study was that there was a gap between women’s prenatal expectations of motherhood versus their postnatal lived experiences of motherhood. It is likely that these unrealistic expectations of motherhood stemmed from the biological essentialist notion of the naturalisation of mothering (DiQuinzio, 1999; Neyer & Bernardi, 2011; O’Reilly, 2016), and intensive mothering practices (Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Wall, 2010; Lee, 2008). These structures are deeply ingrained in society, as they have been reproduced by social systems for hundreds of years (Giddens, 1984). Because of this, the “rules and resources” of these structures tend not to be questioned or challenged (Giddens, 1984, p. 184).

Additionally, the women I talked to revealed that they felt like the default caregivers of their children rather than sharing caring responsibilities with their male partners. This may be due to childcare being attributed to women as their “natural responsibility” (Neyer & Bernardi,



2011, p. 165). This was oppressing for the women I talked to, as it often meant they were expected to complete a 'double day' (Dugan & Barnes-Farrell, 2020; Firestone & Shelton, 1994; Hochschild, 2012; Wharton, 1994). This is especially exploitative, as men are not usually expected to do the same, as it is believed to be "women's work" (Wharton, 1994, p. 198). Furthermore, it revealed that the "sets of rules and resources" surrounding these gendered structures tended to benefit men over women (Giddens, 1984, p. 184).

Despite this, it is possible for women to resist against these oppressive mothering expectations and act independently outside of constraining structures (O'Reilly, 2008). Women can come to terms with not being able to reach unattainable mothering expectations from society. They can achieve this by using subtle acts of resistance through showing their vulnerability and re-writing oppressive discourses to create a more authentic, realistic depiction of motherhood. In the following chapter, I go into detail regarding the mothering guilt women experience when balancing work and family commitments.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **“It’s a woman thing...right?” – A working mother’s battle with guilt**

A prominent theme (Riessman, 2008) identified amongst the women I interviewed was a sense of guilt when balancing work and family commitments. Feeling guilt is an ongoing battle for many working mothers (see Chapter 3, page 30), largely because the pressures of being a ‘good’ mother and a ‘good’ worker are constantly in play, making it difficult for women to maintain these competing identities (Henderson et al., 2015; Turner & Norwood, 2013). As discussed further in this chapter, there are “sets of rules and resources” women are expected to follow within working structures (for example, working long hours) and mothering structures (for example, women prioritising children’s needs over their own), which cause women to feel guilt when they think they are deviating from these structures (Giddens, 1984, p. 184).

#### **“New mother” guilt**

Because of competing employment and mothering structures, mothers may find themselves in a double bind (see Chapter 3). A double bind is where women “damned if [they] do, doomed if [they don’t]” by society, no matter how they behave in the workplace (Catalyst, 2007, p. 1). If a woman conveys qualities that are considered traditionally feminine, such as mothering, her competence is called into question, whereas on the other hand, if she displays conventionally masculine qualities, she may be judged or disliked (Duffy & Pruchniewska, 2017; Shapiro et al., 2008). Double binds also constrain women to “act in certain ways,” in line with the rules of mothering (Hays, 1996, p. 61). For example, if women choose to be stay-at-home mothers, following ‘good’ mothering norms, they are not as valued by society and can be criticised for not doing enough “challenging or interesting work” (Zimmerman, 2000, p. 343). Moreover, stay-at-home mothers are often thought of as having “mommy mush brain” (Johnston & Swanson, 2003, p. 22): a derisive social construct that focuses on women having “foggy-brained confusion and hormone-induced cognitive decline” due to a lack in intellectual stimulation that work supposedly provides (Thornton, 2014, p. 271).

Some studies cover the disempowerment mothers can face by staying home with their children (Johnston & Swanson, 2003; Rubin & Wooten, 2007; Zimmerman, 2000; see Chapter

3). Zimmerman (2000) found that stay-at-home parents felt that society “does not appreciate or value the stay-at-home parent,” and felt twice the amount of loneliness as their career partner (p. 343). Additionally, Rubin and Wooten (2007) found that stay-at-home mothers felt “guilt for not working and making use of their education and skills” and also felt they were not living up to their full potential (p. 341). In Johnston and Swanson’s (2003) content analysis of motherhood myths in magazines, they discovered that career mothers were more likely to be portrayed as “happy, busy, and proud,” whereas stay-at-home mothers were often portrayed as “confused-overwhelmed” (p. 27). In addition to this, stay-at-home mothers were “not associated with knowledge and influence outside the home,” and were not even “seen outside the home” (Johnston and Swanson, 2003, p. 30).

The data I gathered, however, looked at the other side of the mothering conundrum, namely, working mothers who feel guilty when they deviate from ‘good’ mothering norms (Yüce-Selvi & Kantaş, 2019) by prioritising paid work. This is felt by “new” mothers who re-enter the workforce shortly after giving birth. Danielle, for example, experienced this type of guilt when she finished her maternity leave and had to go back to work, leaving her baby at day care:

Danielle: So, at the time financially, I did need to come back to work. So, when you have a baby, when you have your first baby in particular, you’ve got no idea what you’re doing, and so with that, comes a lot of guilt, cause, you know, you’ve had your baby, and I suppose the natural instinct is that you are there to look after your baby when you’re giving your baby away to someone else to have for seven hours a day, that’s pretty tough to manage for emotions and those kind of things. But when you see your baby’s very settled and happy, I think that makes it a lot easier. Had she not been, had she had a different experience, it would have weighed on my mind, I think.

Danielle explained she was dealing with feeling like she was not giving enough of herself to work and to her children:

Danielle: Because you deal with a lot of um, internal... you know, just trying to justify your purpose, and actually, are you giving 100% to work, are you giving 100% to your children? And sometimes you feel like you’re not, and that’s hard to manage.

Danielle then elucidated this further by discussing how her guilt as a working mother was largely to do with being away from her children during the day, and the idea that she was missing out on her children growing up:

Danielle: Yeah, I think you constantly weigh up what you're missing out on with your kids in terms of, seeing them grow and the things they do and the things they learn and stuff like that. It's a big chunk of time when you're away from them, so I'm constantly kind of battling those emotions and thoughts around, "Is this right? Am I doing the right thing?"

Danielle attributed her mother guilt towards going against her "natural instinct" to stay home and look after her baby. She also emphasised that as a new mother she had "no idea" what she was doing in terms of caring for her first child. This made going against 'good' mothering expectations by returning to the workforce and leaving her baby in care with someone else much harder than she anticipated. She specified that she returned to work for financial reasons, meaning that even though she couldn't afford to stay at home with her baby, she was still made to feel guilty about it by society. This could be because women are made to feel like they have a "natural instinct," due to deeply ingrained constructions of the naturalisation of mothering (Chandler & Munday, 2016; Neyer & Bernardi, 2011; see Chapter 3). This conundrum caused Danielle to feel conflicted between going back to work to financially support her family versus the rules of the naturalisation of mothering telling her she should stay home with her child.

Society's obsession with the naturalisation of mothering still constrains women today, even though social systems have reproduced this particular mothering expectation for a long time (see Chapter 3). This can cause women to feel immense guilt when they deviate from the rules of this structure if they work long hours instead of spending time with their children. Danielle illuminated this by explaining how she was constantly trying to justify her purpose and thinking "is this right? Am I doing the right thing?" This shows that she felt like her actions were constantly up for judgement by her co-workers and her peers, and as a result, she felt a responsibility to do "the right thing" as a mother and a worker. This is a prime example of the reinforcement of conflicting structures (see Chapter 3): when mothering and employment structures come together, the "sets of rules and resources" within these structures become even more constraining for women (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). What is key here, is that no matter what decision Danielle made, whether she prioritised work or her family, she would not have escaped judgement by society. This is representative of the lose-lose situation women often

find themselves in, called the 'double bind' – where no matter what decision a woman makes, she will be judged by society either way (see Chapter 3).

Heather labelled her experience of going back to work after her maternity leave period as a “severe emotional crisis,” and she plotted ways she could stay at home to look after her son:

Shannon: Did you feel like you had to come back?

Heather: Yeah I did, and maybe a couple of months before I was due to go back, when you're going through the 'find the right day care for your child,' it was a severe emotional crisis, and I was actually spending most of my time trying to think up money making schemes that I could have from home, so I didn't have to go back to work. For every day care I was like, “How can I send my child to this zoo!” It was really really terrible, but I found one that I was comfortable with, and got back to work. But the mother guilt takes a while to go away.

Heather also felt that her children were the ones making the sacrifices by having her as a working mother:

Heather: Yeah and it's slightly complicated cause I actually don't feel like I am sacrificing anything, personally, other than time with my children. I feel like the people who actually wear the sacrifice are my children, because they're the ones that miss out, and they're the ones, and that's actually a terrible thing, and that's...my key message of today, is actually, you can have it all as a working mother, it's your children that don't have it all, with a working mother.

Heather found going back to work extremely difficult. Her first child was born premature – at 28 weeks - and she had 16 months out of the workforce due to her child's significant health problems. Like Danielle, Heather implied that she felt like she had to go back to work for money reasons. Heather described her guilt towards leaving her child at day care, which she referred to as a “zoo,”: akin to leaving her child in captivity in comparison to the care she could provide at home. She also confessed to spending most of her time at the end of her maternity leave trying to “think up money making schemes” so she could work from home and be with her child.

Heather's guilt also stemmed from the feeling that her children "[wore] the sacrifice," and "[missed] out" because she was career driven. Heather put a particular emphasis on this statement when she precluded what she was going to say with "that's actually a terrible thing, and that's...my key message of, today." When she honed in on her past experiences, Heather persisted in subjecting herself to these feelings of intense guilt, and not being able to move past this guilt that her children have missed out. This is a prime example of the constructed sense of guilt mothers feel when they deviate from the rules that govern motherhood structures (Yüce-Selvi & Kantaş, 2019), that is, that mothers should stay at home and focus on meeting their child's every need (see Chapter 3). This production of guilt is highly oppressive, as working mothers like Heather are trying to reach unattainable intensive mothering standards and are internalising feelings of guilt in the process, causing them to blame themselves (Henderson et al., 2015). Despite how common it is for new mothers to return to the workforce, the rules that govern structural expectations of mothering make women feel they *should* stay home. In turn, this causes them to carry the burden of mothering guilt when they are at work.

Stephanie had a very short maternity leave period of only three months. This was largely because she owned her own business and therefore could not enjoy the maternity benefits of having an employer. Because of this, she felt resentful that she had to return to work to tend to her clients as she would have loved to spend more quality time with her child.

Stephanie: So, going back to work, if I'm really honest, I was a little resentful. Because, had I been in full-time employment with somebody else, or I had my business set up differently, I would have loved to take the year off on maternity leave. So, there was probably the element of resentment, but at the same time, I felt incredibly blessed that I could be so hands on. I didn't have to go into an office, so I wasn't 'woe is me,' but if I'm truthful about the emotions I was feeling at the time, it was a little bit of that.

Shannon: Really hard time.

Stephanie: Yeah! If you're the type of person that really did want to have children and really wanted to be involved on all that level, then yes, it was a challenge.

Stephanie resented going back to work and reflected that had she been employed by someone else, or had her business set up differently, she could have had a longer maternity leave period.

Compared to Danielle and Heather, Stephanie said she felt privileged to be able to work from home so she could be “hands on” with her children: spending lots of time with them in their early years of development. However, at the same time she admitted feeling resentful at the time she had to return to work. This may be because Stephanie identified herself as someone who “really did want to have children” and wanted to be “involved.” Therefore, veering away from her “roadmap” of completely fulfilling the ‘good’ mothering ideals she had aspired towards for so long (Sutherland, 2010, p. 313) made her feel resentful towards her work. This is an example of how deeply ingrained mothering structures are in society (Giddens, 1984), and more specifically, the rule that it is a woman’s “natural responsibility” to stay at home and care for her children (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165).

Like Danielle, Fiona found it challenging being both fully present at work and for her children, and felt like she made sacrifices in both these areas as a result:

Fiona:            Yeah, I often feel I’m making sacrifices all the time. It’s either sacrifices to my work commitments or it’s sacrifices to my family commitments. Examples being, I have sort of made it in my own mind that I’d like to be at school sports days, at presentations, and assemblies. I’ve missed a few of those, and I’ve missed a few based on work commitments that have already been committed to, and also being overseas for work as well, so I obviously can’t make them while I’m overseas. Another good example was yesterday, with it being [Child 2]’s first sort of initiation into school, and I had the [Work Place] AGM that I was presenting at. So, I wasn’t there at his first day of school, as I was with [Child 1].

Within this extract, Fiona verbalised the sacrifices she had made: missing the important events in her children’s lives, such as their first day of school, presentations, assemblies, and sports days. She then explained how she often put pressure on herself to be at her children’s important events, which she admits was a struggle when also juggling work. Fiona’s struggle to maintain her competing identities of ‘good’ mother and a ‘good’ worker (Henderson et al., 2015; Turner & Norwood, 2013) appears quite oppressive. For example, she was constantly attempting to obtain a “model of near impossible standards” (Sutherland, 2010, p. 313),

causing her to feel powerless (Young, 2008) when she was unable to meet her own work and family expectations. This shows that the employment and mothering structures are in conflict with each other, making it difficult for women to meet the rules of each structure (see Chapter 3). When women follow the rules within employment structures (for example, being work oriented, working long hours, and always being available), this clashes with the rules of mothering structures (for example, being child-centred, and focusing entirely on their children's needs).

Danielle, Heather, Stephanie, and Fiona all identified that they felt strong emotions when returning to the workforce after the maternity leave period - namely "guilt," a "severe emotional crisis", and "resentment." The women articulated that these feelings were difficult to manage, especially when they left their children in care, when they would have preferred to stay at home caring for them. The reason for this may be because they had solely internalised the role of the 'good' mother for their maternity leave period and found it hard to reconcile their worker identity when they returned to the workforce (Sutherland, 2010).

The societal expectation that women must be able to "simultaneously" maintain their roles as a 'good' mother and a 'good' worker is constraining (Dillaway & Paré, 2008, p. 459; Giddens, 1984). This is more so when it is not deemed appropriate for mother and worker identities to overlap, especially when women are coming to terms with their new mothering identities. Women tend to find it difficult to reconcile their worker identities because their "limited resources of time and energy are insufficient to fulfil the increased responsibilities associated with both parenting and working" (Peterson et al., 2018, p. 5). From what the women in my study discussed, they generally felt that they should return to work for financial reasons. But when they did so, the turbulent emotions resulting from this decision made them feel like they were diverting from the 'good' mother they desired to be. Intensive mothering ideals, where mothers are expected to be devoted to their child's needs (see Chapter 3) may contribute towards mother guilt, as society suggests that "a working mother = a failed child" (Guendouzi, 2006, p. 904). Therefore, if women cannot 'do it all,' managing their work and family responsibilities equally, they are labelled as 'bad' mothers by society. From listening to the mothers in my study, it was prevalent that they felt conflicted by their worker and mother identities as discussed in Chapter 3 (Henderson et al., 2015; Sutherland, 2010 Turner & Norwood, 2013; see pages 33-36). This shows the stress that employment and mothering structures can cause when they come into conflict with each other, further limiting the women's agency within these conflicting structures.



### **Working mother = 'bad' mother**

The women interviewed were all passionate about their careers and this was an important factor of their identity construction when they had children. Women pursuing careers are faced with guilt when they deviate from the gendered “sets of rules and resources” within mothering structures, that expect them to stay home to care for their children (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). This relates to what Rich (1986) calls the “institution,” a patriarchal structure that ensures that women “remain under male control,” as women are marginalised when they deviate from the ideals of the institution (p. 13). Intensive mothering discourses (see Chapter 3) position women as ‘bad’ mothers if they return to the workforce because they missed their jobs and wanted to reclaim their independence (Kahu & Morgan, 2007b). Furthermore, childrearing responsibilities are attributed to women as their “natural responsibility” (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165), and alongside this lies the gendered expectation that women should carry guilt too when they deviate from these responsibilities.

These feelings of gendered guilt are exacerbated when the feminine aspects of a woman’s mother identity are seen to conflict with the more ‘masculine’ aspects of a professional identity by society (Buzzanell et al., 2005; Kahu & Morgan, 2007b; Turner & Norwood, 2013; see Chapter 3). This is because the ideal worker role is largely based off a masculine model, and women are already seen to be disrupting masculine norms (Williams, 2000). The masculine ideal worker role is characterised by an individual who works long hours, is always available, and is work oriented (Bierema, 2016; Tienari et al., 2002). These structures are centred around the nuclear family, where women are expected to stay at home to be considered a ‘good’ mother by society. This causes women, as mentioned earlier, to be caught in this double bind (see Chapter 3), between the structural expectations of being a ‘good’ mother versus being a ‘good’ worker.

Nicole shared what made her feel guilty and stated that other women leaders like her in the Global Women Breakthrough Leaders’ Programme, a leadership development course she took, felt the same as her:

Shannon:        So, you were talking about guilt before, do you feel it? Or, do you feel like you’ve shifted your mindset?

Nicole: It's a woman thing...right? So I think all of the global women feel guilt. I have...you know what I feel guilty about? Spending money on myself and spending time on myself. That's what I feel guilty about.

Shannon: Really?

Nicole: \*laughs\* Does that sound bizarre when I'm like 100 hours a week to everybody, probably more, to everybody else? The only time I get to myself is when I sleep and when I go to the gym. But I actually feel guilty about that, so, it shows you how differently engineered women are, in terms of their values and upbringing. So, yes, guilt, I think, is an emotion, but I think it's a completely wasted emotion, and I think that's one of the things I learnt through Global Women. If you're putting your time and investment into worrying about guilt, you're wasting your time. It's a completely wasted emotion. Just do your best...enjoy yourself.

Nicole described guilt as being “a woman thing,” and said the way women feel guilt shows “how differently engineered women are, in terms of their values and upbringing.” This is fascinating, as this suggests that women are “engineered” to feel guilty as they are taught the “sets of rules” of gendered structures to follow from a young age, that imply that women should put others' needs before their own (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Nicole admitted herself that she found it “bizarre” that she felt guilt having time to herself when she gave the majority of her time to her family and her work. She affirmed that guilt is a “completely wasted emotion,” and she's learned that it's not worth her “time and investment.”

Nicole's description of feeling guilt suggests that there is a “guilt gap” between women and men (Hays, 1996, p. 104). The guilt gap is a term to describe women experiencing higher levels of guilt than their male partners (Hays, 1996). This gendered guilt is the product of social systems reproducing the “sets of rules and resources” of gendered structures that expect women to put their own needs last (Giddens, 1984, p. 184; see Chapter 3). This also explains why these gendered structures are so deeply ingrained in society. Male partners can also take on the role of the “fun dad,” where they enjoy fun time with their children “when and how they choose,” leaving the mother to complete the mundane, day-to-day parenting responsibilities (Sutherland, 2006, p. 164).

It must be noted that Nicole's partner was the exception to the rule, as he took on his fair share of mundane parenting responsibilities. He stayed at home and worked part time, which gave him more time and flexibility to support their children. However, he had more opportunities to be a 'fun dad' than Nicole, as she was busy with work during the week. During the school holiday period, Nicole often had to work, meaning her partner had time to do 'fun dad' activities with the children, as Nicole described below:

Nicole:               ...he's amazing, he takes them on Wellington tours and does all sorts of things, a lot of hiking and, yeah. They're very lucky to have such a dedicated dad.

Nicole's talk about her partner being a dedicated dad shows that there is a "gender discrepancy" between how mothers and fathers are seen respectively when caring for their children (Craig, 2006, p. 275). Men tend to benefit from the rules surrounding gendered structures, because as the 'breadwinners' of the family, they are not generally expected to partake in completing domestic and childcare responsibilities (see Chapter 3). Therefore, men are more enabled within these structures to explore their fathering identities without any pressure from society to do so. Research has found that a father's time spent on childcare tasks tends to be more fun, such as reading and playing, which implies that time spent fathering is less like work and can be done at the father's discretion (Craig, 2006). Also, it is less common for fathers to be alone with their children. An example of this is when the term 'babysitting' is used to describe fathers caring for their children alone, implying that a father engaging in childcare is optional (Wilson & Prior, 2009). This is why when fathers, such as Nicole's partner, take on their share of mundane caring responsibilities, they are positioned as "exceptional" fathers (Wall & Arnold, 2007, p. 514). This is because they are doing more than what is expected of them by society's standards. On the other hand, when mothers engage in fun, interactive activities with their children they are not seen as 'fun mums,' as this is seen as a 'normal' and what is expected of them as women.

Heather went through a particularly difficult time when her job and her husband's job were constantly in conflict. In this situation, it can be perceived as her husband having made the sacrifice by quitting his job. However, on the other side of the argument, Heather made the ultimate sacrifice as the full-time worker. She received judgement, as she deviated from society's gendered rules by taking on the breadwinner role (a role traditionally held by a man) and lived with guilt as a result. Additionally, when both she and her husband were still working, Heather felt her children were experiencing high levels of stress, which contributed

to her existing feelings of mothering guilt. A challenging part of this was when her husband reached a breaking point in terms of negotiating who would pick up the children after school:

Heather: We just had a rule, that um, he always did drop off, and I always did pick up, if I was in Auckland, and if I wasn't in Auckland, he got to do both, pretty much. But, um, but then, I'd find that sort of, at half past four on any given afternoon, I'd be sending him an instant message going, "Oh my god I'm having a little work drama, can you go and get the kids today?" and he'd be like, "Oh I'm having one too," and then we'd have a spat over the IM on who was gonna get the kids! And it's such a dysfunctional, such a dysfunctional thing, terrible, that was actually the catalyst for him saying, "Well, okay, I'm just going to quit my job for a while..."

In Heather's situation, the "dysfunctional" re-negotiation of who was going to "get the kids" was the "catalyst" for her husband deciding to quit his job. This is an example of mothering and employment structures conflicting with each other, as it became so constraining for Heather and her husband, that they lost the ability to negotiate childcare responsibilities as a dual-career couple. As a result, Heather took the sole responsibility of earning the household income, so that her husband could be available to care for the children. This meant she was not living up to the 'good' mother ideals defined by society, which state that childcare responsibilities should be the responsibility of the mother (Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2006).

Arguably, these were feelings that came from 'good' mothering ideals enforced by society, when she and her husband worked full-time and juggled childcare responsibilities:

Heather: ...they end up having really long days, at day care, or after school care, or you know, just walking around the school until mum eventually gets there and picks them up. And my husband's had to make sacrifices as well recently, we've just decided that it was just getting way too hard on the family with my work, that he actually he's given up work now.

Shannon: So, what was his job?

Heather: So, he actually worked just next door at [...] and he was, yeah, in a very senior IT role doing large scale infrastructure projects so, yeah. He didn't particularly

love it, and it was, yeah, getting to kind of, you know, almost family stress...which wasn't our stress so much, it was the children's stress, so...we're experimenting with him being at home...So, trade-offs again, he's not now earning any money, yet, the children are getting picked up every day.

Heather noticed the change in her children when her husband left his job to stay at home to be there for their children while she pursued her career.

Heather: The kids are definitely happier. You can see them having a more normal and functional life now.

However, it is also likely that Heather's talk was a product of society telling her that having one parent at home is normal and by default, is the "best" situation for children (Dillaway & Paré, p. 442). This idea further fuels the guilt mothers feel when they choose to work over staying home with her children. Furthermore, Heather may have been taking on the guilt of her husband having to leave his "senior IT role."

As the breadwinner of her household, Heather explained how she developed her own strategies to manage her mother guilt:

Heather: I wouldn't say it's a perfect balance, but I have strategies. So, I kind of have this weird debits and credits things that I do with the family, and I run the ledger on a weekly basis. And I like to keep my debits and my credits even, so, if I know that I'm going to be away for a full-on week, and it'll be like all, you know, coming off the ledger, then I'll try and [make up for it] the previous week or the week after with the family.

Shannon: Yeah! That makes sense.

Heather: Yeah, so it's a weird sort of little mathematical thing that I do, so that the family and work still stay even. So, this week, I've actually had quite a lot of stuff in the morning before work, and after work, so next week I've decided to take a couple of days off work leading into Easter so that I can gain back that time that I stole off my family through work this week.

Heather concluded that her strategies helped her come to terms with being “average” as a mother and worker:

Heather: ...Be prepared to be just a little bit average at both.

Shannon: \*laughs\*

Heather: Yeah.

Shannon: Have you kind of come to terms with that a little bit now?

Heather: Mm, no, the debits and credits thing that I do, has kinda helped me really, be okay with the fact that some weeks are just gonna be a crap mum, but the next week I’m gonna catch up and be mother of the year.

Weick (1995) explains how sense-making can influence one’s identity, stating that individuals are constantly redefining themselves, “presenting some self to others and trying to decide which self is appropriate” (p. 20). This is particularly the case for working mothers, who are constantly negotiating how to deal with the guilt that comes with deviating from the rules of mothering and employment structures (Giddens, 1984). In Heather’s example, she engaged in her own sense-making tactics through alternating between being “a crap mum,” and then being “mother of the year.” Therefore, Heather’s sense-making through her debits and credits system enabled her to “re-frame the socially acceptable good mother” and reshaped her identity into an average “good working mother” (Buzzanell et al., 2005, p. 276). Furthermore, Heather’s sense-making of her mothering role is measured against societal expectations of the ‘good’ mother – which she framed as “mother of the year.” It was difficult for Heather to make sense of her experience as a working mother, as there was a “lack of alternative motherhood discourses” for her to draw on (Choi et al., 2005, p. 177) as a mother pursuing a career. With no one to relate to, working mothers feel inadequate as they cannot successfully live up to unrealistic rules of mothering and employment structures that expect them to either put all their energy into their work or their children (Giddens, 1984; see Chapter 3).

This shows the negative effects that conflicting structures can have on women. She felt like she had to live up to the “rules and resources” of these structures equally in order to be a ‘good’ mother being fully present for her children and a ‘good’ worker, being present for her team, which is highly oppressive (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). As a result, Heather felt inadequate

and guilty, as her lived experience differed to the social construction of a 'good' mother, which made her feel like she needed to "catch up and be mother of the year."

### **Resisting against mothering guilt**

Even though many women who are juggling being mothers and workers experience guilt in one way or another, it is possible for them to use their agency to resist oppressive societal pressures that cause this guilt. These acts of resistance against mothering guilt are often overlooked, as they are more "subtle, routine, micro and discursive" forms of resistance (Thomas & Davies, 2005, p. 732). Subtle acts of resistance, namely reserving time for leisure and asking for help, can "spark off a myriad of events" that help rewrite discourses surrounding guilt, and give rise to other forms of resistance (Thomas & Davies, 2005, p. 732). A few of the women I talked to advocated for themselves as "active agents" (Green, 1998, p. 172) of their own lives when they purposefully took time out to themselves for leisure time.

As already mentioned, the time women are able to spend on leisure activities is heavily constrained, which may be the cause of gendered social and power structures, as men do not have the same difficulty making time for leisure (Green, 1998; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Shaw, 1994; Shaw, 2001). This may be because women tend to work harder than their male partners to find time for leisure due to their domestic and family commitments as default caregivers (see Chapter 2, page 17). This also shows that women have to be "active agents" of their own time and ask for help to fit in leisure activities, rather than being "passive recipients" of oppressive structures (Green, 1998, p. 172). Additionally, women as mothers can find it particularly hard to participate in leisure activities without feeling "guilt associated with leaving children with others to take time out for themselves" (Miller & Brown, 2005, p. 410). While the women talked to their struggle of prioritising their own leisure time (see Chapter 5, pages 53-56), they also shared moments when they pursued activities they enjoyed, caring for their wellbeing and resisting guilt in the process.

Stephanie stated that it's worth the extra effort to organise work and family around taking time to yourself to learn new things and find fulfilment outside of your day-to-day routine:

Stephanie: So, my mental health is good because I can get my exercise, you know? And I love that, and I think it's great for the kids to see, and also too I've started tennis lessons, which sounds very elitist. I used to play when I was younger but not very well, and I'm loving that, and that's, again, and I've done evening

courses recently on yoga and psychology and chakras. And the backing of organising that was insane, in terms of having to get people to cover me here, but, so worth it. And it's great for the kids! The kids see that mummy's trying to learn new things, and I feel like I'm still nurturing my inner growth on what I need to be a fulfilled human. It's not just about drop offs and pick-ups, press releases, and things, it's expanding my horizons a little bit more.

Shannon: Yeah, it makes you a better mum.

Stephanie: Hugely so, and a better wife! All of that, because you kind of feel like, "Oh I've had my fill, right! What do you need? Here I am! I'm ready!"

Stephanie's narrative shows that when she took time for herself to exercise, learn new things and expand her horizons more, she found that she was more present at work, in her relationships, and with her children. When she "expand[ed] her horizons" she came to the realisation that she could have her own life outside of her work and family responsibilities, which in itself, was a resistant thought against discursive guilt. The way she stated that, "organising that was insane," when referring to organising her leisure time, revealed how hard she worked to make her leisure time a reality. She also spoke to the way her children "see that mummy's trying to learn new things," so she can be a good role model for them. This role modelling for her children was especially resistant, as she took the first step in a process of structuration (Giddens, 1993; see Chapter 3). She disrupted oppressive structures that make women feel guilty for having leisure time and set her children an empowering example to follow.

For Nicole, she prioritised this time to herself every morning before work: in particular she went to the gym, which gave her a way of putting time back into her own wellbeing:

Nicole: If you're doing your best, and you're enjoying yourself, and you're putting a bit of time into yourself, that's a great thing, because you'll be better if you're putting a bit of time into yourself.

Nicole inferred a similar message to Stephanie in her narrative in the way she says that if "you're enjoying" and "putting a bit of time into yourself" then "that's a great thing." Like Stephanie, Nicole spoke to how bettering yourself will bring about positive outcomes so you can be "better" in terms of your health and wellbeing.



Therefore, the way Stephanie and Nicole took time to themselves and pursued their interests can be seen an act of resistance, in line with the practice of empowered mothering (O'Reilly, 2008). This is because they "express themselves through activities which provide personal empowerment," while also challenging "constraining view[s] of femininity, sexuality, or motherhood" (Shaw, 2001, p. 191). Also, fitting in leisure time is important for maintaining identity and a "sense of self" (Bialeschki & Michener, 1994, p. 63). Stephanie's narrative pinpointed this, as she described how her leisure time helped with nurturing her "inner growth," and expanding her horizons. Furthermore, Stephanie and Nicole both stated that fitting exercise into their routines, and taking that time for themselves, was good for their mental health.

Another way that the women I talked to subtly resisted societal pressures that caused guilt, was when they asked for help from their family members, friends, and within their organisations. By doing so, these women showed agency when they mobilised their voices, as asking for help is considered as a "sign of weakness" by society (Seligman, 2011, p. 105).

Fiona, for example, discussed how she negotiated her working hours with her chairman so that she could spend more time with her children:

Fiona: But also negotiating family and work commitments, I negotiated with my chairman that I was going to change my hours and start work earlier and finish earlier. So, generally my working hours are around 8am till 4pm, which does enable me to have some time with the children in the evening other than getting them bathed, fed, and straight to bed and not spending any time with them. That flexibility in working hours for me was fundamental, because without that I would really have to question around the time that I would have to spend with the children, and it's important to me now as well.

As the CEO of her organisation, Fiona reported to the chairman of the board. When she negotiated her working hours with the chairman, she showed agency as she asked him if she can have control and flexibility over her work schedule. Also, by altering her working hours to spend more time with her children, Fiona was communicating to the board that her children were as "important" as her job. Through her request, she became an active agent of her own time, and prioritised what was most important to her.

Stephanie recognised that saying 'yes' when help was offered was acceptable as it gave her more time in her day to do "something different."

Stephanie: I think, definitely saying yes when help is offered. That's been an amazing learning and I always say yes now. My mother in law very random will say, "Oh, I've over-cooked, do you want this for your dinner tonight?" I don't care if I've got stuff in the fridge - yes please! That is just a god send. Or, you know my mum over the last couple weekends has randomly offered, "Oh, I'm gonna do some baking, shall I make something for the kids for their school lunches?" Yes! Yes! Even though I love to do that, it's just like yes, because that's allowing me a bit more time to do something different. So, I think making sure you say yes when help is offered not try [to] be that super mum that has to be the best, you know, I don't have that drive.

The way that Stephanie framed accepting help from her family as an "amazing learning" experience, and that she will "always say yes now," implies that Stephanie hasn't always asked for help in the past. This could be due to the accepting help being stigmatised, as it implies a "loss of control" and reveals our vulnerabilities (Klaver, 2007, p. 4). Additionally, women feel guilty for needing help in the first place due to the oppressive expectation of being "that super mum that has to be the best." However, Stephanie recognised that asking for help and sharing the load would benefit her in the long-term, as it allowed her "a bit more time to do something different." This is an example of agency, as she acted independently of constraining structures that place a stigma on asking for help. When she accepted that she did not have to be a "super mum," this made Stephanie's work and family commitments more manageable, especially when she often ran the household on her own.

The ways in which Fiona and Stephanie mobilised their voices to ask for help show how women can resist against the stigma that society constitutes asking for help being a "sign of weakness" (Seligman, 2011, p. 105). Seligman (2011), whose research centres around resilience training, defines this deeply ingrained belief as a "thinking trap," in which people fear that others will judge their "worth or ability on the basis of a single action" (Seligman, 2011, p. 105). This could be the case for the women I talked to, as they likely feared that people would judge their competence as mothers and workers if they asked for help. However, their actions of asking for help showed that they resisted this.

For example, Fiona showed initiative when she negotiated flexible working hours with her chairman. Additionally, Stephanie resisted against the fear of being judged by society as an incompetent mother when she asked for help from her family when she needed it. Studies have shown help-seeking behaviours are proactive and ultimately beneficial for organisations, as individuals are ensuring they have the sufficient resources they need to perform better (Lee, 1997; Lee, 2002; van der Rijt et al., 2013) In a study regarding mothers' seeking help from a family support program, it was found that women who used the support services believed they lacked competence in their parenting abilities, even though overall, they were capable women (Telleen, 1990). Therefore, overcoming this fear of judgement, which Stephanie described as an "amazing learning," and asking for help when it is needed showed agency, proactiveness, and initiative.

### **In conclusion**

In my analysis of how working mothers combined work and family responsibilities, it was clear that they were experiencing guilt because they *felt* they were not doing enough at work or for their children. A possible reason for this is due to women being caught in double binds (Shapiro et al., 2008), where any decision they make is criticised by society. Another explanation for women feeling mothering guilt could be due to social constructions formed by naturalisation of mothering (Chandler & Munday, 2016; Neyer & Bernardi, 2011), where women are made to feel like they should have a natural instinct. This made the women feel conflicted and guilty when they left their babies in day care so they could go back to work to financially support their families.

Additionally, this study confirmed that there was indeed a guilt gap between the women and men (Hays, 1996). According to the women I talked to, they felt that their male partners did not carry the gendered expectation that they were responsible for the care for their children. Instead, they took on the role of "fun dad" (Sutherland, 2006, p. 164), and are labelled as "exceptional" fathers (Wall & Arnold, 2007, p. 514) as a result. Further to this, it seems that men benefit from these gendered structures as they are enabled to explore their fathering identities without feeling guilt.

However, some of the women I talked to proved it was possible to subtly resist the oppressive societal construct of mothering guilt, for example, by taking time out for themselves for leisure and asking for help. Here, women showed they were "active agents" of their own time, rather than being "passive recipients" of oppressive structures (Green, 1998, p. 172; O'Reilly, 2008).

In the chapter that follows, I present the synthesis and evaluation of how working mothers navigate flexible working arrangements.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Flexible working arrangements

The final theme (Riessman, 2008) emerging from the women's talk centred around their use of flexible working arrangements. Flexible working arrangements can allow women to better combine family and work life so that they have more opportunities to develop their careers (Papalexandris & Kramar, 1997). However, flexible working arrangements can also be examples of how parental policies within the workforce can create oppressive environments for working mothers to navigate. Specifically, when mothering and employment structures are combined, women are even more constrained within the conflicting "rules and resources" (see Chapter 3; Giddens, 1984, p. 184).

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, the first mention of a flexible shift in organisational culture can be traced back to 1999, when the Equal Employment Opportunities Trust held their first Work and Life awards (Masselot, 2011). The Labour government then established the Work-Life Balance Project in 2003, a consultation process with the public, and recognised that there were issues to consider for further policy development (Nelson & McNaughton, 2004). In particular, the Government identified that there was a rise in women participating in the workforce, and a decrease in the breadwinner family model (Nelson & McNaughton, 2004). In 2007, employees who had "care-taking responsibilities for any person" were given the right to "request a variation in their time and place of work" under the Employment Relations (Flexible Working Arrangements) Amendment Act 2007 (Masselot, 2011, p. 78). Most recently, in 2015, the Employment Relations Amendment Act 2014 came into effect, extending flexible working rights to all employees (Champions for Change, 2017). Other changes included removing the "requirement of six months' prior employment" so employees can request flexibility on their first day and reducing the timeframe in which employers must respond to requests from three months to one month (Champions for Change, 2017, p. 3). However, it is important to note that although the Amendment Act gives employees a right to apply for flexible work, employers also have the right to decline applications if they are not suitable (Diversitas, n.d.). This shows that organisational power can still override employee rights to work flexibly.

Despite the family-supportive benefits flexible working hours can provide for working mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it must be noted that Aotearoa/New Zealand policies surrounding flexible working were not "specifically targeted at women's or families' well-being" (Masselot, 2015, p. 61). Instead the goals of the Employment Relations Amendment (Flexible Working

Agreements) Act 2007, are broad, unspecific, and gender neutral (Masselot, 2015). The goals were for people to “be enabled to participate more often, or more effectively, in activities that are important to them,” and for “organisations [to] prioritise the work-life balance of their employees, leading to more productive, sustainable employment relationships and workplaces” (Department of Labour, 2008, p. 6). This reveals that although flexible working policies give the illusion that they are created to support families, when in reality, they are created to support the agenda of organisations.

The women in my study talked favourably about flexible working arrangements in a variety of ways. Principally, it appeared that flexible working arrangements helped the women juggle home and work life. Danielle and Fiona, for example, both discussed how flexible working arrangements enabled them to manage their work and family responsibilities respectively, at times that suited them. Danielle discussed how she used flexible working arrangements:

Danielle: Yeah, so I mean, I say I’m physical in the office from 9 till 2, but obviously I pick up the kids [...] and then I’m back online. We’re so tech enabled here, I’ve got my laptop, I’ve got my mobile, and I can plug in anywhere [and] be available. So, yeah, I guess that’s the [advantage of] being really mobile.

Fiona also discussed how her team was supportive of her use of flexible working arrangements:

Fiona: Even knowing that the board and the team are really supportive of me going to school assemblies or going to pick up my child and dropping them back at day care etc. It’s always diarised, so other people know what I’m doing and where I am - it’s just a way of life. The children are well-known in the office.

Shannon: So, they come in sometimes?

Fiona: Sometimes during school holidays, they will come in and they’ll sit. All the team members know my children. Sometimes if there’s drinks after work at 5 o’clock on a Friday night, I’ll go and pick up the children and bring them back to the office, so that I’ve done both - I’ve collected the children but I’m also committing to the team to not miss out on any social events as well. So, yeah, they’re very well known in the team - they’re very good with them with regards to drawing and preparing for them coming in as well.

Danielle described her flexible working style when she said, “we’re so tech enabled here,” that she “can plug in anywhere,” so she can “be available.” This suggests that in Danielle’s mind, her flexible working arrangements allowed her to fit her work schedule around her children. Similarly, Fiona explained her flexible working as “a way of life,” scheduling her work around her family, and bringing her children into the office if she needed to. Danielle and Fiona both resisted the mainstream norm of the 9 to 5, which meant they felt they had some freedom over their work schedules. They both alluded to how this helped them manage their stress levels (Fursman & Zodgekar, 2009; Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

A family-supportive organisational culture can be enabling for working mothers (Allen, 2001; Thomas & Ganster, 1995; see Chapter 3), as they can be assured that they are trusted by their organisations to work at a time that suits them. In her interview, Danielle described how flexible working was part of her organisation’s culture, when she said that “our culture is that we’ve got that option.” Fiona also mentioned that her “team [were] really supportive” with her working flexibly. Due to organisational culture and a supportive team environment, Danielle and Fiona felt that working flexibly was normal and routine, which made them feel comfortable taking up these arrangements. As studies have shown, having flexible working arrangements that are supported by the culture of the organisation, increases the chances that employees will use these arrangements (Allen, 2001; Lewis, 2003; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Family friendly policies in the organisations of these women are an example of an enabling structure (Giddens, 1984), as they enable the women to balance their work and family responsibilities easier.

Alongside these positive accounts about flexible working arrangements, I identified disadvantages of such arrangements. It appears that there is a gendered expectation in society that mothers will fit their childcare and domestic responsibilities around their work, while fathers are not required to do the same (see Chapter 3). This is evident in Fiona’s recount of a situation where she picked up her children and brought them back to the office for social drinks, so she had “done both”: childcare and work responsibilities. Her desire to commit to her team and her children simultaneously may have been exhausting, especially when there was not an expectation for her husband to do the same. Fiona may not get to socialise with her colleagues as much as she would have liked, as she was never ‘off the clock’ as a mother. Additionally, her work responsibilities may also limit the quality time she spent with her children.

Danielle and Fiona both appeared constrained by their flexible working hours, as ultimately it meant their juggle of home and work life – their double day - became more intense (Firestone & Shelton, 1994; Hochschild, 2012; Wharton, 1994; see Chapter 2, pages 15-18). This meant they fitted in their childcare and domestic responsibilities around their work requirements. As discussed in the literature review, flexible working arrangements can be perceived as a “gender-charged concept” as they allow more time for women to complete these double day responsibilities, therefore reinforcing “traditional gender roles” (Masselot, 2015, p. 71). Further to this, there is the expectation that women must seamlessly excel in their careers while being able to spend quality time with their children, which is not sustainable for many women (see Chapter 3). Friedan (1998) calls this the “superwoman syndrome,” as women take on an unfair share of family responsibilities compared to men, while being expected to work (p. 206). This re-affirms that the gendered structure of the family is still prevalent: even in flexible working arrangements, women are primarily expected to organise childcare around their workload. Men, on the other hand, are only expected to take on the breadwinner role.

There is another way to view flexible working arrangements: Scholars argue that work-life balance is a myth, as it brings about the false possibility of equally dividing work and home life, when in reality they are in competition with each other (Gambles et al., 2006; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005; Young, 2018). This was the case for Danielle and Fiona, who met their work and family requirements, but at the sacrifice of them both being in constant conflict. For example, there appeared to be an expectation that Danielle would go back online to work as soon as she got home and that she would be easily contactable, even when she was with her children. This seemed to have an oppressive effect on Danielle: she was expected to use her flexible working hours to also meet all her childcare arrangements, which in turn meant that she was required to work overtime (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

Furthermore, women who work from home can often feel isolated by missing out on the more social aspects of working in the office (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001). For the most part, working is a social experience, and helps people feel connected and maintain relationships outside the home. Ultimately, even though women may “choose” to work from home for childcare reasons, it is a constrained decision, as they are not able to separate work and family in the same way their male partners can (Sullivan & Lewis, 2001, p. 138).



### Co-worker attitudes towards flexible working arrangements

What also emerged from the theme of flexible working arrangements was the struggle working mothers faced when receiving judgment from co-workers who have not experienced the juggle of parenthood and work. A predicament Danielle found herself in, was that she felt judged by her co-workers for taking advantage of her organisation's flexible working hours to drop off and pick up her children from school.

Danielle: I guess people who don't have children, you know, they come to work and they're not going home and starting to go into 'mummy mode.' It's not that they don't, I guess they don't understand it, so it's hard for them to justify. "Oh, I see you leaving at 2 o' clock, but I'm still here until 7 o' clock," but, if they had a similar situation to me, then they would expect the same treatment I would imagine so, yeah.

Danielle's co-workers did not seem to understand that when she left at 2 o'clock, she not only went into "mummy mode," but she also continued working when she got home. Danielle told me how she was often judged by her co-workers as they thought she was slacking off, even though in reality, she worked just as hard after hours.

The judgment Danielle received from her co-workers is a prime example of the misunderstandings and inequalities women experience at work when they become mothers (Haynes, 2008). In some organisations, an ingrained "long-hour culture" and a "lack of understanding of childcare constraints" (Haynes, 2008, p. 638) are factors that contribute to mothers being seen as 'bad' workers who "skive off" work and "take advantage" of their employers through using flexible working hours (Dowswell & Hewison, 1995, p. 28). It is ironic that organisations, like Danielle's, have flexible working policies available that support working mothers, but can simultaneously have an underlying culture that judges women who use these policies to their advantage. This may be because many employees may strictly adhere to "sets of rules and resources" found in traditional employment structures (Giddens, 1984, p. 184; see Chapter 3), such as an ingrained "long-hour culture" (Haynes, 2008, p. 638). Therefore, seeing women stray from these structural rules may cause co-workers to believe that working mothers are not dedicated employees.

These judgements working mothers receive for working flexibly is particularly oppressive, as men who are in the same situation are rarely made to feel this way (Correll et al., 2007; see

Chapter 3). When analysing Fiona's situation, it seems evident that her team was more understanding than Danielle's when she managed work and family responsibilities. Fiona previously mentioned that her children were "well-known" by her team, and both her team and the board were very supportive of her doing drop-offs, pick-ups, attending school assemblies, and bringing her children into the office. Conversely, for Danielle, it would not be appropriate for her to bring her children to work, as there was not the same level of understanding and accommodation of working mothers in her office. Fiona's organisation is an example of an exemplary family-supportive culture, as her board and wider team encouraged her to balance work and family life, and it was considered part of the organisation's norms and values (Allen, 2001). For Danielle, her organisation's culture allowed her to have flexible working hours to care for her children, but she was not provided with the same level of support from her co-workers as Fiona's workplace provided.

Kahu also received much more support and acceptance than Danielle in her workplace. When I talked to Kahu, she explained about how she believed Māori communities were so much more accepting of children in a working environment. This accepting culture enables women to resist against the societal norms that state that it is not okay to bring your children to work.

Kahu: Yeah, I will say, in my early experiences, Māori communities are so much better with babies. Even to the point where, even now, when I have a hui at a marae, which I do as part of my job, I'll take my kids, I know there'll be kids there, I know it's no questions asked, kids are welcome.

Shannon: Yep.

Kahu: Whereas I'll look at my colleagues, and they still don't bring their kids, you know.

Shannon: To the hui? Yeah.

Kahu: It might be a weekend hui or a night-time hui, you know, sometimes they don't have to, but, they're also not sure if they can, whereas I know, they can, you know, like I know I can.

Shannon: \*laughs\* Yeah.

Kahu: Because, kids are normal.

Shannon: Yep.

Kahu: Kids are normal in the workplace, kids are normal at a marae, kids are normal at a hui, so, there's that element I think, that exists.

Kahu noted that her children were used to "hui<sup>8</sup> hopping" and further explained the difference between working at a Māori organisation versus a non-Māori organisation:

Kahu: But they do, like, they just come to my hui, I take them to my hui, there's lots of double ups, so they come to work with me if I have to go to work, they come to a hui with me, they're totally set up on their iPad things. They could sit in a three-hour hui, and not make a sound, they have become used to, hui hopping.

Shannon: Was there a time when they didn't really get it?

Kahu: When they were little, but like all kids, you know, it's not that they didn't get it, they were just normal children! \*laughs\*

Shannon: Yeah, exactly!

Kahu: He didn't want to be there! You know, so, all of that stuff used to happen, and again, this goes back to the difference between working in a Māori organisation and a non-Māori organisation. At a Māori hui, there's lots of spaces for them to, generally there's other kids who, play with them, you know, who can entertain them, or, if I'm speaking, or facilitating at the hui, someone else will pick up the kid, walk out with them and do what needs to be done and then come back. In a non-Māori environment, they won't do that, it's not comfortable for someone else to pick up my child and, soothe them, while I'm doing what I'm doing. Everyone comments on how well-behaved my kids are, and I was like, "It's not well-behaved, it's well-trained."

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<sup>8</sup> Hui is a Māori word used to describe a meeting, gathering, or an assembly.

Kahu explained that at a Māori hui, she knew that “kids [were] welcome” and there were no questions asked if employees needed to balance work and family responsibilities. In this sense, “kids are normal,” not only at a marae<sup>9</sup> and at a hui, but also in the workplace. This is completely different to the judgement Danielle received as a mother in her workplace, where children were seen as out of place. This reveals the significant differences between Māori and Pakeha workplaces. It has been said that Māori culture has been considered to be collectivistic, as opposed to Pakeha, who are considered to have an individualistic orientation (Haar & Brougham, 2013). Ratima and Grant (2007) explain that Māori identity is based on “connectivity and affiliation to past, present, and future generations” whereas Pakeha identity is based on “autonomy, freedom, and self-interest” (p. 2). In particular, research shows that an emphasis on whanaungatanga (relationships) is valued in Māori workplaces, and contributes to overall career satisfaction (Haar & Brougham, 2013). In contrast, it is common for Pakeha to separate work and family, in which “spiritual matters” are “entirely relegated to the private sphere of the home” (Ratima and Grant, 2007, p. 4). Kahu states that if she is speaking or facilitating at the hui, it is completely normal that “someone else will pick up the kid, walk out with them” and “do what needs to be done and then come back.” This is different in a Pakeha environment: she said that “they won’t do that” because “it’s not comfortable.” The discomfort surrounding bringing children to work could be attributed to rules regarding Pakeha employment structures, where women feel as if they have to separate their work and family.

As mentioned in Chapter 3 (see pages 27-28), mothering is treated very differently in Māori culture, and this is demonstrated by Kahu knowing she can bring her children to work with “no questions asked.” This is an example of how the structure of the Māori community can be enabling for mothers needing to balance their family and work requirements. Mothering is highly regarded in Māori culture, as it represents the continuation of whakapapa, preserving the next generation. Furthermore, mothering is shared by whānau, the extended family. In more recent times, the definition of whānau has been extended further to include Māori who share commonalities such as a marae and a workplace (Le Grice et al., 2017; Metge, 2014; Smith, 1995). When Kahu described bringing her children to work and to hui, and the situation of someone picking up her child and taking them out of the room to soothe them, this showed the degree of whānau support in her workplace. The supportive nature of whānau allows mothers (Māori or non-Māori within Māori workplaces), to bridge their work and family responsibilities as a way of life. A recent report by Te Puni Kōkiri (2015) showed that using

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<sup>9</sup> A marae is a sacred and communal meeting ground in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

whānau-centred approaches improves individual and whānau wellbeing and helps achieve better outcomes across sectors such as health, education, housing, and employment. This shows that the “rules and resources” surrounding structures in Māori organisations are widely accepting of mothers who work flexibly (Giddens, 1984, p. 184).

### **Using flexible working arrangements as acts of resistance**

Flexible working arrangements can, however, also be used agentially by working mothers in how they negotiate what really matters in their lives. As a business owner, Stephanie ensured she structured her business model around her life as a mother. This meant she maintained flexible working hours so she could be parent help at her daughter’s school:

Stephanie: Oh my god, and this is the thing! I think parenting, A, is a privilege, and B, I think I’ve always known I wanted to be a mum, like I’ve always known that since a young age. I don’t want to look back and think, “I was too busy working for other people.” You know, as clients. I applaud women who don’t feel, you know, each to their own as far as I’m concerned, I’m not judgmental about that at all. But for me, knowing myself, I feel quite strongly about that for me. So, the fact that this morning I’ve been up to school for an hour and a half being parent help. I thought, “God, I’ve signed up for an hour and a half, that’s a long time out of my day.” But I’m not going to think that at the end of the year, do you know what I mean? It actually went really fast, and it’s really sweet to be a part of that and see how the classroom operates, and see all her peers and how they interact, and feel a bit more part of her new life in the school side of things. So yeah, I love that, and I have worked really hard to structure my life around that, to make sure it is happening, because it makes me happy, it fills me up. And credit to my husband, he is very supportive of that too, which is great.

The way Stephanie used her flexible working hours to spend quality time with her children and volunteer at school, can be seen as a subtle act of resistance. This is because she was able to take the structural elements (Giddens, 1984) of flexible working hours and manoeuvre them to work in her favour as a mother. She confirmed this through saying “I love that, and I have worked really hard to structure my life around that,” when discussing how she structured her work to be present for her children. In this respect, Stephanie was able to prioritise the parts of mothering that brought her happiness – an act of resistance, because she was not simply

going through the motions of organising her childcare responsibilities around her flexible work schedule. Instead, she pointedly used her flexible schedule to spend quality time with her children, therefore prioritising what brought her joy as a mother and allowing her to savour precious moments with her family.

Fiona's narrative also shows how the structure of the organisation can be used as a "competitive advantage" in the way that employees can work around their family commitments.

Fiona: Yeah, from an organisational perspective I'm very fortunate that my board has made it very easy for me. That's also allowed it to make it easier for my team, my expectations of the team working within [Work Place]. I would like to think that potentially one of our competitive advantages is [taking] the average working day and working around people's family commitments. Through my involvement and my understanding now of what I need to do as a working mother, I hope that I have helped others feel comfortable with doing that too and potentially have attracted some other working mothers that are also flexible and working around their children.

I have another colleague that works 7 till 3 so that she can also spend time with her two boys as well. And it's often a very good discussion when recruiting, as it's often a very good question for individuals around how the organisation works around flexible working hours and I can, as chief executive, share my example and other team members examples to give some comfort to potentially a woman that has either got children or is thinking of having children. "But how may the organisation respond to that with regards to me coming back in the workforce?" So, I've currently got a team member on maternity leave for twelve months, but she would have already had a very high comfort level I think upon the flexibility when she's considering her return based upon my own, as a leader, flexibility.

Shannon: Yeah, so it's just taking that judgement out of the equation to start with aye?

Fiona: Yeah, absolutely, and I guess I'm in a fortunate position of leading by example in that way. If I was male, I would potentially still have the ability to do that through talking about my wife, and my flexibility around my children as well.

So, I just think I'm in a fortunate position to provide some leadership around flexibility and around the importance of family and balance within people's lives.

Fiona used subtle forms of resistance by encouraging her colleagues to resist the "average working day," when she helped them to feel comfortable with using these arrangements through "leading by example." In this respect, Fiona was able to shift away from the traditional male-centred structure of the workplace to help other women feel empowered to work flexibly. She used the organisation's supportive structure as a means to attract potential employees who had children or were thinking of having children in the future. She also referred to a hypothetical situation of "if I was male," saying that working flexibly would still be a possibility, but more in terms of having marital support from having a wife rather than organisational support. This may be because women are usually the default caregiver of their children, and it is less common for men to use flexible working arrangements.

Like Fiona, Kahu explained how supportive the structure of her organisation is, calling it a "high-trust work environment," and said she's "mindful of creating that environment" for her team.

Kahu: They can trust you, to do the work, whether you're in the office or you're not in the office, they trust you, to make up the hours. If you have to take four hours out because you've got an emergency with your child, not a big deal, because they know you're gonna do a four-hour meeting on the weekend, which is gonna suck up your time. We have a high-trust work environment, I think that makes a huge difference. But as a manager myself, I'm mindful of creating that environment for other people who work for me, so, women and men.

Shannon: Yep.

Kahu: You know, if they need to do something for their kids, we support them to do that. They need to work from home, they need to go to counselling cause their relationships are falling apart because their family is, you know...Everything that happens, effects the whole family.

Shannon: Yep.

Kahu: Not just your role as a mum, but your role as a wife, as a partner.

Kahu also took advantage of a flexible working arrangement herself, as she worked four and a half days a week. This is so she could use her Friday afternoons to drive from the city where she lived to another region to visit her son, or alternatively work at her organisation's office in that same region:

Kahu: And with my son in [region], I would sometimes go out and work out of our [region] office for a day, because, it means I don't have to race up and race back. I can just take my time, work out of there, I'm still working, but I'm doing it in a way which works around my life. So, that's the main thing that the organisation, gives me. My income comes with me doing the job that I do, so, I don't think it's what they give me, it's what I expect them to give me, because I'm doing a big job! \*laughs\*

Kahu did not have to "race up and race back" between her city of residence and the region where her son lived, which gave her the freedom to "take her time" so she was able to work, but also spend quality time with her son. The way she said "I'm doing it in a way which works around my life" was significant, as it showed that Kahu prioritised her life and her family and ensured that her work fitted around it. Additionally, because Kahu was a single mother, her use of flexible working arrangements was even more resistant, as her case differed to the women who used flexible means to pick up the slack with childcare and household tasks. Like Stephanie, Kahu used her organisation's enabling structure (Giddens, 1984) to spend more time with her children. Furthermore, she transferred this resistance to her colleagues, supporting them so that they could support their families.

As demonstrated through Stephanie, Fiona, and Kahu's examples, the structure of organisations can enable women to resist the oppressive norms of working between 9 and 5 in order to spend quality time with their children. These acts of resistance may seem small-scale, but the ways in which they are centred around the "destabilizing of truths" and "challenging subjectivities" surrounding traditional working norms; and "normalizing discourses" on flexible working arrangements; made them still effective (Thomas & Davies, 2005, p. 720). These acts of resistance were agentic (see Chapter 3), as in these situations, the women were putting their own wants first, and structuring their working lives around enjoying their roles as mothers. On the surface, it may seem that the women were still having to juggle work and



family, but a deeper analysis shows that they were actually negotiating flexible working hours to work in their favour – in ways that brought them happiness as mothers. Additionally, Fiona and Kahu encouraged their colleagues to resist too, and take up flexible working arrangements so they can prioritise the joys of quality time with their families. Employees who see examples of their leaders “walking the talk,” and using flexible arrangements, may be influenced to agentically make decisions about their work/life balance that truly serve them (Callan, 2007, p. 687).

### **In conclusion**

As discussed, flexible working arrangements were one of the main methods the women used to balance their work and family responsibilities. Flexible working arrangements are beneficial as they can allow women to have freedom over their schedules so they can manage their work and family responsibilities at times that suit them. Also, having a family-supportive organisational culture is beneficial, as the participants were assured that their organisations trusted them to work flexibly.

However, as identified in my literature review (see Chapter 2), I confirmed that flexible working structures can have disadvantages for working mothers. There is a gendered expectation that mothers will fit their childcare and domestic responsibilities around their work, but fathers are not required to do the same. As a result, the women allowed more time to work a double day, as they scheduled in their childcare and domestic responsibilities – therefore reinforcing “traditional gender roles” (Masselot, 2015, p. 71). Also, at times, flexible working arrangements blurred the lines between work and family time, which had oppressing effects on the women.

Additionally, I discovered that women who used flexible working arrangements experienced judgment as a result of a deeply ingrained “long-hour culture” that still exists within employment structures (Haynes, 2008, p. 638). This culture can lead co-workers to view mothers using flexible working arrangements as ‘bad’ workers who “skive off” work (Dowswell & Hewison, 1995, p. 28). Despite this, Māori workplaces were more supportive and accepting of children in a working environment. Mothering is highly regarded in Māori culture, making it easier for women to balance work and family responsibilities in a Māori workplace.

Further, the women proved that flexible working arrangements could be used agentically to negotiate what mattered to them, such as spending quality time with their children. Also, the

women empowered their colleagues to take up flexible working arrangements as a way to resist oppressive working norms of working 9 to 5.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I identify the conclusions and recommendations that have resulted from my research about women and the challenges they face negotiating their work and family responsibilities. I will provide a summary of the research findings and outline the final conclusions of this research project alongside a range of recommendations. These recommendations will be voiced by the participants themselves, in terms of what they felt needed to change in order to support women more, in balancing work and family life. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of this project, and pinpoint opportunities for future research in this field.

#### **Summary of the research findings**

The outcome of the research can be summarised under three broad themes (Riessman, 2008): expectations versus the reality of mothering; mothering guilt; and organisational support.

#### *Expectations versus the reality of mothering*

The initial theme that surfaced from the women's talk (Riessman, 2008) was that there was a gap between women's prenatal expectations of motherhood and their postnatal lived experiences of motherhood. The prenatal expectations consisted of the belief that mothering would come naturally, and that their babies would be healthy and easy to manage. It is possible that this gap, generated by unrealistic expectations of motherhood coming naturally, stemmed from the biological essentialist notion of the naturalisation of mothering, that attributes childrearing as a woman's "natural responsibility" (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165). These unrealistic expectations may have also been derived from intensive mothering practices (Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2006) that pressure women to act within the boundaries of what society constitutes as 'good' mothering. It is concerning when women feel their postnatal reality does not align with their 'vision' of what motherhood would be like as research has shown that it may lead to new mothers experiencing loneliness, inadequacy, and confusion as a result (Miller, 2007). These "rules" that govern mothering structures (for example, women should stay home with their children and prioritise their needs above everything else) form unrealistic expectations of mothering (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). These rules are so deeply ingrained that they tend not to be questioned or challenged by new

mothers. Additionally, there were moments in the interviews where the women specified that they felt like the default caregivers of their children over their male partners. This finding is also of concern, as often, men are not expected to bear the same level of childcare responsibilities as women are, as it is believed to be “women’s work” (Wharton, 1994, p. 198).

A significant finding that emerged from one participant’s interview was that it is possible for women to resist these oppressive expectations through disclosing their “juggle” of work and family responsibilities and showing their vulnerability. This pushes against the “superwoman” intensive mothering expectations that expect mothers to have everything sorted (Friedan, 1998, p. 206; Hays, 1996). Small-scale acts of resistance such as this are a positive step towards re-writing oppressive mothering discourses (Thomas & Davies, 2005).

### *Mothering guilt*

Throughout the interviews, there was an overwhelming sense of guilt in the women’s talk. This appeared especially prevalent when the women returned to the workforce after having their children. This finding relates to the social construction of the naturalisation of mothering (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011; Chandler & Munday, 2016), which made the women feel they were going against their ‘natural instinct’ by returning to work. Further to this, it was commonplace in the interviews that the women experienced guilt when they felt they were not giving enough time and energy to their work or to their children. This is an example of a double bind (Shapiro et al., 2008), where women are caught between the structural expectations of being a ‘good’ mother versus being a ‘good’ worker, and any choice they make is criticised by society. These findings show that women experience guilt when they feel they are breaking the “rules” of mothering and employment structures (Giddens, 1984, p. 184).

The women’s talk also spoke to a guilt gap they felt was between them and their male partners. Again, this was attributed to childcare being a woman’s “natural responsibility” (Neyer & Bernardi, 2011, p. 165), not a man’s. This suggests that men are not made to feel the same level of guilt imposed by society, as they are not affected by the “rules” of mothering and employment structures in the same way women are (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Because of this, men are likely to be able to explore their fathering identities without guilt, and take on the role of “fun dad,” where they can spend quality and interactive time with their children (Sutherland 2006, p. 164).

However, an important finding that surfaced from the women's talk was that they were able to resist guilt resulting from oppressive structures by the way they purposefully took leisure time for themselves. As a result, the women reported that taking this time to themselves was good for their mental health and wellbeing. The acts showed that the women could be "active agents" of their own time, rather than being "passive recipients" of oppressive structures (Green, 1998, p. 172).

### Flexible working arrangements

The majority of the women interviewed adopted a flexible working arrangement in order to manage their family responsibilities within their work requirements. However, a finding that surfaced from the women's talk about flexible working arrangements was that they carried pros and cons. The women's talk suggested strongly that they found flexible working arrangements beneficial in the ways that they allowed them to have freedom over their schedules. This often worked in their favour as they were able to prioritise spending quality time with their children and experience the joys of motherhood.

There were moments when flexible working arrangements proved to be a constraining structure for the women. In one participant's interview, she stated that she experienced unfair judgment from her co-workers due to her use of flexible working arrangements. I argue that this judgment correlates with a deeply ingrained "long-hour culture" that exists within employment structures (Haynes, 2008, p. 638), which frames women working flexibly as employees that "skive off" (Dowswell & Hewison, 1995, p. 28). Another disadvantage of flexible working arrangements that surfaced from the women's talk, was that they allowed the women more time to complete their double day responsibilities (see Chapter 3), such as childcare and domestic duties. Further, there was an expectation that the women, being well-connected and available due to working flexibly, would go back online to work when they were home with their children, which blurred the boundaries between work and family.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The following section presents the final conclusions derived from my research, as well as recommendations that aim to provide insight that may help and empower women to balance work and family responsibilities in a more manageable way. I conclude that a common denominator of many of the issues the women faced is how society is structured in ways that oppress women. To address this, my first recommendation is that society's structure needs to

change. This can be achieved through men taking on more childcare and domestic responsibilities in the home, women practicing empowered mothering, and a change in organisational culture to reflect the needs of parents. My second recommendation is that ways of working need to change. Organisations need to provide a high trust work environment for their employees. Also, the government can improve current policy around flexible working arrangements and make people aware of their working rights. Further to this, organisations can improve their family friendly policies to benefit working mothers. These recommendations are voiced by the participants themselves, and I then expand and reflect upon them.

First of all, it was especially prevalent in this study that the majority of issues women face are connected to the way society is structured – this my overarching conclusion. The structure of society is highly gendered and this is shown through oppressive structures exposed through the women’s talk such as the naturalisation of mothering (Chandler & Munday, 2016; Never & Bernardi, 2011); intensive mothering standards (Hays, 1996; Johnston & Swanson, 2006); and lingering expectations of the nuclear family. When women deviate from the “rules” of these mothering structures, it often results in feelings of guilt (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Stephanie described the level of guilt working mothers experience and expressed the universal benefits of reducing this guilt:

Stephanie: I think that mums that are doing everything kind of feel guilty that they’re not being a full time mum and guilty that they’re not fully into their job, and you’re kinda guilty that you’re part time at home and housekeeping, you know, this level of guilt, I think if there’s some way we can get a lot more...space around all that we would be, it would be a lot more beneficial to everybody.

As Stephanie pointed out: the “rules and resources” that surround mothering structures, such as the expectation that women should be stay-at-home mothers, need to change in order to stop guilted mothers unfairly (Giddens, 1984, p. 184).

One way this could occur, would obviously be if men were to take on more of the childcare and domestic responsibilities in the home. The structural properties of the nuclear family generally still remain in today’s society, as men and women are expected to follow the gendered stereotypes of the breadwinner and the stay-at-home mother. Kahu suggests switching this discourse, so that it is more acceptable for men to take on more of these responsibilities which have long been labelled as “women’s work” (Wharton, 1994, p. 198).

Kahu: I think often a lot of times women are judged in the workplace when they take leave, but actually, if you flip the switch or the discourse a little bit, make it more... “As a man, I can take on more of a role if I want to, and it’s okay.”

Having a more equal division of labour in the household will be fundamental for enabling more women to pursue their careers. Furthermore, this will ensure the elimination of women working a double day and give them time to pursue leisure activities which are good for improving mental health and wellbeing, as revealed by the participants in this study. What is crucial, however, is that this structural shift must be foregrounded by men taking on these responsibilities as *natural and normal*, rather than being seen as fathers acting in exemplary ways (Doucet, 2018; Wall & Arnold, 2007). This would involve men taking up their fair share of domestic and childcare responsibilities, and co-workers and managers seeing this as a natural and normal part of the workforce. Further to this, Doucet (2018) adds that there is a need to “provide ample space for men’s narratives of care” and resist comparing them to mothering standards (p. 236).

A step that women can take to resist the oppressive, gendered “rules and resources” (Giddens, 1984, p. 184) that surround mothering structures is to practice empowered mothering (O’Reilly, 2008). This is where the mother lives her life and practices mothering from a “position of agency, authority, authenticity, and autonomy,” and does not always put their children’s needs before their own (O’Reilly, 2008, p. 7). This is one way that the structural rules of mothering could shift over time, in turn providing a chance for future generations to perceive empowered mothering as the norm.

Another structural change required to stop society guiltning mothers is to change organisational culture. It was evident in this study that some women felt judged and misunderstood by their co-workers who had a “lack of understanding of childcare restraints” (Haynes, 2008, p. 638). I argue that the culture of organisations needs to change to reflect the needs of mothers and fathers. In particular, this would be beneficial for working mothers so that they don’t feel caught in a double bind between their work and family responsibilities (Shapiro et al., 2008).

Heather: I think it’s an employer thing, and employers just have to be prepared to be flexible. And you know, so many times [people] put an 8 o’ clock meeting in the diary, or a 4 o’ clock meeting in the diary. If you’re a mum, that has to take their kids to school, how on Earth are you ever [going to] make it to that 8

o' clock meeting without trying to find someone else to drop the kids off? I think, be really considerate as an employer, actually put yourself in their shoes, what's going to be, acceptable?

A change in organisational culture can be achieved through creating an environment where women do not feel like they have to choose between motherhood and having a career. This could involve *more* employers accommodating the individual needs of working mothers, removing the stigma associated with using family-friendly policies and creating office policy that ensures working mothers are not contacted for work-related reasons outside agreed working hours. Furthermore, it was found that Māori workplaces were more supportive and accepting of children in a working environment, as mothering is highly regarded in Māori culture. Therefore, adopting a whānau-centred approach in the workplace would be a positive step towards changing organisational culture (Te Puni Kōkiri, 2015).

This leads to my second main recommendation, which is that ways of working and the “rules and resources” of employment structures in organisations need to change (Giddens, 1984, p. 184). Nicole explained that as a society, we need to continue “redesigning work” and change the way we view success, so working mothers can ultimately live more fulfilling lives at work and at home, without feeling guilt:

Nicole: So, I think the structure of work, the structure of society, fundamentally needs to be thought about to enable men and women to support more satisfying and fulfilling lives. This is not unique to women as a lot of men want to be able to work and to share more responsibilities at home too. We are going to have to fundamentally think about how we measure and view success, how we think about work, and actually, frankly, I think the younger generation, your generation, and my kids, are already redesigning work. They're saying, “we're not going to work these stupid 70-hour weeks,” questioning how we measure productivity and moving this away from time to the value work as only part of their lives. “We are going to work differently and we're going to value different things,” and I think that is good, and I think that is the reality of the future of work as well. I think that will be good for women. It will enable more women to be able to do what they want at work and at home and in their whole lives. It will make them a whole person...



Nicole explained that employment structures are not sustainable in their current form. She stated that we need to change the way we view success to help working mothers balance work and family without feeling guilty. The key element to redesigning work is trust. Organisations need to trust that their employees will complete a fair workload while working hours that suit them. There is potential for employees to thrive in a high trust work environment, as they can work in a way that suits them, prioritise what matters to them, and be more productive as a result.

Kahu described how employment structures in organisations could be improved to reflect the needs of working parents, and also suggests how the government could help:

Kahu: So, whether, you know, the supplements that go into supporting families need to be increased to support that, or more subsidies need to go into care of children, so that parents can work [for] a longer time, or creating an environment where the job isn't 9 to 5. You know, where there is more flexibility around the hours that you work so you can work around the children. Kahu: Or even more flexible roles, like job sharing. Does a job need to be 40 hours a week? Could it be 20 and job shared? What is the regulatory environment that can support businesses to be more flexible, in their approach?

Through legislation, the government needs to send firm directives so that agreements can be established between new mothers re-entering the workforce and their employers. At present, the Employment Relations Act 2000 requires parties "to be active and constructive in establishing and maintaining a productive employment relationship" where both parties are "responsive and communicative" (s 4). Additionally, employees have the "statutory right to make, or to have made on their behalf, a *request* [emphasis added] for a variation of their working arrangements" (Employment Relations Act 2000, s 69AA). This shows that currently, although employees have the right to *request* a variation of their working arrangements, employers ultimately have the power to accept or decline. My recommendation is for the Employment Relations Act 2000 to be amended further to require employers to offer flexible working arrangements as part of the recruitment process (in consultation with their prospective employees), and be required to include these within the contract of employment. This would be a significant step towards normalising flexible working arrangements, and empowering working parents to take them on to ease the balance of work and family responsibilities. As the lives of new parents change significantly, they may not have the time or

energy to request an alternative arrangement themselves, so this would make it more accessible for them. These arrangements could be renegotiated as part of the appraisal process, to ensure that they are revisited as the employee's circumstances change. These arrangements could include but are not limited to: job sharing; reduced hours; flexible schedules; working from home; or compressed work weeks. Further, Labour Inspectors would ensure compliance and provide advice, guidance, and mediation if needed.

Additionally, there is potential for the government to play more of a role in raising awareness of existing policy for new parents. Many employees may not be aware that they have a right to request a flexible working arrangement by law (Employment Relations Act 2000, s 69AA). The government could actively raise awareness of flexible working policy through a public campaign, so that working parents know their rights. Moreover, this campaign could be extended to encourage fathers to request flexible working arrangements so that they can take on more of the domestic and childcare responsibilities at home. This would be a positive step forward in terms of setting the standard for an equal division of labour between women and their male partners at home.

Another way employment structures can evolve to support working mothers is for organisations to improve their family friendly policies. Currently, mothers are entitled to take up to 26 weeks of paid parental leave and partners are only eligible for two weeks of unpaid leave (Employment New Zealand, 2020). Additionally, parents are only able to use their own sick leave to look after their children if they are unwell (New Zealand Government, 2020b). As seen in some social-democratic states, such as in Scandinavian societies including Norway and Sweden, "gender equality is an explicit policy goal" (Duvander et al., 2010, p. 46). Aotearoa/New Zealand organisations could follow the lead of these social-democratic states by improving their family friendly policies through extending parental leave beyond government requirements; providing fathers with paid parental leave; boosting pay; or providing additional sick days. Other options organisations could adopt include reintegration programmes for new parents and setting up onsite nurseries (dependent on the size of the organisation) to enable women to be in close proximity to their children. Introducing these employee benefits for new parents would ease the conflict experienced by balancing work and family, and ultimately achieve the overall objective of providing opportunities for women to climb the career ladder.

## **Limitations and future research**

A possible limitation of this study is that the ages of the children of the women I interviewed ranged from kindergarten age to early teenagers. When recruiting participants, one selection criteria I used was that the age of the youngest child was a maximum age of ten years old, to ensure that the experiences the women were sharing were relatively easy to recall. However, if the women were interviewed soon after their return to the workforce after having children instead, they could have described their experiences in real time and possibly in more detail. Future research could replicate this study, interviewing the women multiple times through their experience leaving the workforce to have children and returning to the workforce to continue their careers.

A significant finding from this study was that the women interviewed experienced the effects of the double day (see Chapter 2). A weakness of this study was that I did not ask the participants directly if they experienced the double day and how it may have affected them. The women alluded to their experience of the double day, so it was apparent that this was an issue. It could have been a great opportunity to explore in more depth what the division of childcare and domestic responsibilities was like in the home. This provides the following insight for future research: To what degree does the double day exist in an Aotearoa/New Zealand context? Further research could usefully explore this, and determine what steps are required to eliminate the unequal division of labour in the home.

Another source of weakness in this study, was that I did not include a varied range of ethnic groups to ensure I had a diverse sample, and this may have affected the final result. I managed to include a Māori woman in my sample, and the rest of the women in my sample were Pakeha. This was due to the barriers I had recruiting participants. I struggled to connect with women in these ethnic groups as I could not connect with them through my personal networks. I was further constrained by the fact that during the recruitment process, I was selecting my participants based on the criteria that they were leaders in their field. Further research should be undertaken to explore the narratives of women workers and mothers from different ethnic groups such as Pacific or Asian women, to ensure a diverse range of narratives.

## **Final thoughts**

This thesis has presented my findings from talking with women about their experiences of balancing work and motherhood in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Understanding the challenges

women face as mothers and workers provides insight into where change and improvements could occur, whether it be in the household, workplace, or in government policy. I end this thesis project with Stephanie's words regarding how having more women pursuing successful careers, and ultimately securing senior leadership positions, will instil a positive future for Aotearoa/New Zealand:

Stephanie: I think the more women we have in CEO roles, and management roles, the better it will be, because then you've got empathetic people...you know, and without being sexist, it is a different connection when you have held something inside of your body for nine or ten months...I feel if there's more empathy in those higher positions, which we are slowly getting there, I feel then that will translate more beneficially to mums...and dads!

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## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

### Date Information Sheet Produced:

23-08-2018

### Project Title

Balancing work and motherhood: Looking at the experiences of working mothers in Aotearoa/New Zealand

### *An Invitation*

Kia ora, my name is Shannon and I would love for you to participate in my research project. I have always been passionate about women's issues, especially the topic of women who are mothers and working in leadership roles in New Zealand. I am completing this research project to contribute to the completion of my thesis for a Master of Communication Studies at the Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

I want to talk to women like you, who negotiate their requirements as a leader with their family requirements and listen to your stories and experiences.

### **What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of this research is to identify the barriers that women face as mothers in leadership positions. I will be using a feminist narrative analysis to analyse the interview data. I plan to make recommendations to organisations and the New Zealand government with regard to making the lives of women in leadership who are mothers significantly easier. There is also potential for this research to be published in research publications (e.g. academic journals).

Additionally, this research's purpose is to inform the completion of my Master's thesis, so I can graduate with a Master of Communication Studies.

### **How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?**

I have identified you as a woman who is both a mother and currently in a position leadership in your workplace that has a child/children aged 10 years old or under. You were recruited through receiving an invitation from one of my professional contacts who thought you might be interested and knew you fitted the criteria. I therefore invite you to participate in my research, as I believe you will have valuable insight in relation to my research topic.

### **How do I agree to participate in this research?**

If you are willing to participate in this research, you can agree to participate by completing and signing the Consent Form attached and returning it to me on the date of the interview.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You will also have the right to review transcripts once they are completed. Additionally, you are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

### **What will happen in this research?**

This research will be conducted through a series of semi-structured interviews. I will ask you a series of questions in relation to your role as a leader and a mother. During the interview, you

will have the opportunity to express your thoughts, opinions, stories, and experiences in a private and quiet safe space that is convenient for you.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

It is unlikely that you will feel at risk or experience discomfort as a result of this research.

**What are the benefits?**

By participating in this research, you have the opportunity to contribute to the publishing of recommendations to organisations and the New Zealand government. This could potentially make life easier for working mothers who are leaders in New Zealand through a change in legislation or organisation taking these recommendations on board.

Participating in this research will also help me obtain my Master of Communication Studies through the completion of my master's thesis.

Additionally, you will be provided with a small gift as koha for your knowledge and time.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

I will only discuss the information you provide in your interview with my supervisor, Dr Christina Vogels (who may need to view information for analysis purposes), with the exception of any quotes and interview data that have been extracted for the narrative analysis. I will ensure that all notes, transcripts, and voice recordings are kept confidential. This will be achieved through securely storing both electronic and hard copies of the data in Dr. Christina Vogels' office on Level 12 of the WG Building at AUT City Campus in a separate, locked cabinet. The data will be stored in this location for six years.

Also, pseudonyms will be used to provide you with limited confidentiality, and your name will not be published in the thesis, unless you have explicitly expressed your consent for your name to be used in writing first. Additionally, the recorder can be turned off at any point during the interview if you wish. You will also be sent a copy of the transcript via email and will have the opportunity to edit or retract the transcript up to a certain date. This date will be provided once the transcript has been sent.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

An hour of your valued time will be a cost of participating in this research.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Please kindly consider this invitation within a two-week timeframe.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

Yes, you can choose to receive a summary of the research findings by indicating this on the Consent Form.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Christina Vogels, [christina.vogels@aut.ac.nz](mailto:christina.vogels@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext. 7886. Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 ext. 6038.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Shannon Barclay

Email: [shannon.barc@gmail.com](mailto:shannon.barc@gmail.com)

Phone: 027 848 7996

**Project Supervisor Contact Details:**

Dr Christina Vogels

Email: [christina.vogels@aut.ac.nz](mailto:christina.vogels@aut.ac.nz)

Phone: 921 9999 ext. 7886

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27th November 2018, AUTEK Reference number 18/392.***

## Appendix B: Consent Form

- **Project title:** *Balancing work and motherhood: Looking at New Zealand women leaders' careers through a feminist lense*

**Project Supervisor:** *Christina Vogels*

**Researcher:** *Shannon Barclay*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 23-08-2018.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I understand that I can turn of the recorder at any point during the interview.
- I understand that pseudonyms will be used for my name and the name/s of children, colleagues, and family members to protect me with limited confidentiality (unless I have explicitly expressed in writing that I consent to my name being used).
- I agree to take part in this research.  
I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one):  
Yes  No
- I wish to be identified by name in this research (please tick one):  
Yes  No

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

Date:

***Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27th November 2018, AUTEK Reference number 18/392.***

*Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.*

## Appendix C: Indicative Interview Questions

- How do you feel your decision to have children is received in business circles? If so, in what ways?
- Could you tell me about what it was like to stay in/ re-enter the workforce after you had children? If you re-entered the workforce, why did you go back? If you stayed, how was this received?
- How do you negotiate family and work requirements?
- Have you had to make sacrifices while negotiating family and work requirements? If so, what sacrifices have you had to make?
- Who provides you support as you continue your career? What does this support look like?
- What role do you think the government and/or organisations should play to make it easier for mothers to retain leadership positions in the future?
- Has being a mother helped you become a better leader? Has it helped you view certain situations differently?
- Have you had a mentor support you in your career? Do you mentor other women in your line of work?