Involved fatherhood and the career in Aotearoa

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Abstract

Fatherhood in Aotearoa has been changing, and fathers are no longer judged only on their ability to provide financially for their families (Hohmann-Marriott & McMath, 2012). Legislation increases in the cost of living, the number of women in the workplace, and the influence of traditional values have contributed to this change (Hohmann-Marriott & McMath, 2012; McAllister et al., 2021). Little is known however, about involved fatherhood and how this impacts the career. Traditionally the domain of women, fathers are increasingly expected to be involved in the hands-on care and emotional, physical and social needs of their children (Hohmann-Marriott & McMath, 2012; Bataille & Hyland, 2023). Typically, women have experienced significant negative impacts on their careers due to the demands of motherhood and the stereotypes around how this impacts them, these include receiving lower wages, slower career progression, and feelings of less visibility in their teams (Baker, 2012; Lyonette, 2015; Pertold-Gebicka, 2020). The impacts of highly involved fatherhood on the career and how these impacts compare to those typically experienced by women is a gap in the existing body of literature.

This research aimed to understand the experiences of involved fathers balancing fatherhood and their career, and comparing them to those typically experienced by women. It will also look at how organisations can, and are, supporting fathers through this period. To understand this, fathers were interviewed who were actively employed, utilising flexible work practices to manage fatherhood, and who self-identified as highly involved, and the themes from these interviews were identified and analysed.

This study identified several short-term impacts on men's career experiences due to involved fatherhood. These included anxiety around changing roles, less visibility within their organisations, and potential effects on promotion. However, positive experiences like being seen as more serious, ready for promotion and finding it more accessible to build connections with other fathers in the work environment were also present. Fathers did not expect the adverse effects of fatherhood to have a substantial long-term impact on their careers. Instead, they were seen as a consequence of decreased career focus and time associated with raising younger

children. These were thought to pass once children were older and demanded less time and care from parents. Manager and team support was the most significant factor in successfully balancing work and fatherhood, followed by organisational supports such as parental leave and flexible work policies.

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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 used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), 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.

Amy Rosser-Moir
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This thesis is dedicated to my children. I am lucky to have such amazing sons, and I hope that, in some small way, I can help other parents spend more time with their children without sacrificing their careers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Raising children is a role that has been significantly shaped and moulded by society, power, and privilege. Gender norms have shaped who takes on most of the childcare in the home as well as working patterns and careers for both men and women (Gaunt, 2013; Lersch et al., 2017). Most unpaid domestic work, including childcare, has been performed by women and viewed as women's work traditionally (Devi & Ravindran, 1985; Bittman et al., 2003), impacting the lives and careers of women pre- and post-children (Budig & England, 2001). Women have been participating in paid work for decades. However, motherhood has significantly impacted the types of work they partake in, their success, and their earnings (Budig & England, 2001). Women have experienced a significant wage gap (Austen & Mavisakalyan, 2018) and slower promotion and development, which may be due to the need to balance the demands of motherhood with paid employment (Budig & England, 2001). These adverse effects have led to ongoing wage and personal wealth gaps for women, even up to the time of retirement, particularly where there are multiple children (Lersch et al., 2017; Austen & Mavisakalyan, 2018).

Fathers have, in contrast, typically been seen as being responsible for financially supporting the family unit and less so hands-on with the day-to-day childcare (Gaunt, 2013). Some research posits that fatherhood may lead to positive career impacts, such as being seen as more settled and committed to work and even wage premiums due to fatherhood status (Hodges & Budig, 2010). Most research into working fathers has focused on fathers who are less involved in, or responsible for, hands-on care and consider their primary responsibility to be providing financially. This means they are unlikely to have significantly changed their work patterns or careers related to fatherhood. Fatherhood and masculinity are changing landscapes, however, and the expectations of fathers have shifted significantly (Parsloe et al., 2021). Many fathers now engage in “involved fatherhood”, taking on more of a role within the family in the hands-on care of their children and the other domestic roles that become necessary as part of having a family (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). This change in the way fatherhood looks is relatively recent. However, despite a general increase in ‘involved fatherhood’, fathers still perform less childcare in their families (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). Fathers are also utilising less of

the family-friendly policies available through their workplaces and making fewer changes to their careers than mothers are (Bataille & Hyland, 2023).

Aotearoa New Zealand context

In New Zealand, fathers' involvement in raising their children has significantly changed over recent generations (Hohmann-Marriott & McMath, 2012). Aligned with findings in many other countries, fathers in Aotearoa are increasingly anticipating high levels of involvement in the day-to-day care of their children, a significant change from the traditional views of those in previous generations (Hohmann-Marriott & McMath, 2012; Pryor et al., 2014). Work and personal life are no longer seen as entirely separate, and more and more people wish to balance these two elements of their lives (McAllister et al., 2021). These changes have been influenced by several external factors, some of these comparable to many Western countries, but some factors that are unique to the Aotearoa environment, such as legislation, cost of living, number of women in the workforce, and the influence of Māori values (Hohmann-Marriott & McMath, 2012; McAllister et al., 2021). In Aotearoa, women are actively encouraged to return to paid employment after having children to contribute economically, and the percentage of those returning while their children are still young is increasing (Peterson et al., 2018). The Ministry for Women (2024) indicate that 67.4% of women participate in the labour market, compared to 72.7% of men. This increase in women in the labour market has led to a scarcity of time and resources for families, meaning that work and family conflict have been challenging for many mothers (Peterson et al., 2018). Despite the norm of returning to work, mothers are still subjected to traditional female gender norms and may experience questioning and doubt as to whether they can be hands-on mothers while also undertaking paid employment (Peterson et al., 2018). This may contribute to the underutilisation of women, with research showing that women in Aotearoa have an underutilisation rate of 13.8%; this figure includes women who want to work more and are available for work, as well as those who may not want more hours in paid employment or who are unemployed (Ministry for women, 2024). This increase in dual-income families has likely contributed to the expectation of involved fatherhood in Aotearoa.

Though there have been significant changes in how involved fathers expect to be and how involved society expects them to be, the reality is that fathers have not generally taken on an equal portion of the care. Research suggests that only 53% of fathers in Aotearoa describe sharing childcare responsibility, and women still spend significantly more time than men on unpaid domestic work (Reilly & Morrissey, 2017). Additionally, though child care may be transitioning to a more shared arrangement, the responsibility still primarily sits with mothers in Aotearoa (Hohmann-Marriott & McMath, 2012). Domestic responsibilities are split 50/50 in only around 10% of Aotearoa couples, with women outlining that they perform around 69% of the care on average (Westpac, 2021). Though the domestic responsibilities men are taking on are increasing, gendered ideas and the reality of the division of care and domestic work are slow to change. In Aotearoa, one factor that has been acknowledged as possibly contributing to gendered ideas of care is the focus on breastfeeding and the relationship between mother and child (Schmidt, 2008). The importance of this feeding method is the prevailing information provided to parents, particularly mothers, during pregnancy and post-partum within both the hospital and community care environments (Schmidt, 2008). Some research suggests that fathers in Aotearoa mainly support this feeding method; however, they may also want to be involved in feeding their newborns to develop attachment (Alianmoghaddam et al., 2017). While this time is an important one to the health, well-being and continuing relationship between mother and child, the focus on this, and the framing around alternative arrangements for feeding infants, may discredit the potential benefits to all parties of taking other or mixed, approaches (Schmidt, 2008). In research around breastfeeding and the push for this, fathers have outlined the impacts of this as feeling less visible or feeling that they may be less able to bond with their newborns and feeling anxious and unable to support the new mother and child (Schmidt, 2008; Ng et al., 2019).

Another area that may impact the current involvement of fathers in New Zealand is paid parental leave. This was introduced in New Zealand in 2002 (Reilly & Morrissey, 2017). The current parental leave legislation is based on the concepts of a primary and secondary carer (Kulkarni & Mok, 2022). Parental leave allowances have increased in length and financial support; however, the leave, by default, goes

to the mother or birthing partner (Employment New Zealand, 2024). While mothers can transfer part of this leave to the other parent, this need to transfer away from the birth parent is likely to reinforce the societal norm that mothers are the primary carer, with default leave for the other parent being called secondary carer leave. When applying for leave, the pregnant and birthing person is classed as the primary caregiver and is entitled to a period of 26 weeks paid and 26 weeks unpaid for a total period of one year (Employment New Zealand, 2024). The secondary carer, however, receives a total of two weeks of statutory unpaid leave by default if specific criteria are met (Reilly & Morrissey, 2017). The allowance held by the birthing parent and the role of the primary carer can be shared with the father in certain circumstances (Westpac, 2021). However, few fathers take on this primary carer role in NZ (Westpac, 2021). There are several potential issues with the leave available by default to fathers in Aotearoa and legislation framing the birthing parent as the default parent. One of these issues is that many fathers will not meet the eligibility criteria and, therefore, are likely to be ineligible even for the two weeks off; this is likely to affect waged workers in seasonal or precarious employment in particular and may impact certain groups more than others (Kulkarni & Mok, 2022). This would potentially affect as many as one in four fathers who could be ineligible for this leave, and the leave being unpaid also means it is likely that those from lower-income families may be financially unable to utilise it (Kulkarni & Mok, 2022). Research has suggested that many fathers feel undervalued in New Zealand, and this idea that fathers are the partners to the primary caregiver rather than an equal parenting figure is likely to contribute to that (Reilly & Morrissey, 2017). Nevertheless, around 78% of fathers report taking the statutory leave entitlement when they become fathers (Westpac, 2021). However, only around 17% of these fathers take on the role of primary carer for their children (Westpac, 2021). New Zealand fathers want to spend more time with their children, and time spent together early in their life may predict their future investment of time and effort in raising their children; this is particularly important and an issue with the current allowance for paternity leave in Aotearoa (Reilly & Morrissey, 2017; Bach, 2015).

New Zealanders do want to challenge existing gender norms around childcare however, with research in 2017 showing that 92% of families do believe there should be equal involvement in child-raising from both partners (Reilly & Morrissey,

2017). While parental leave options are limited, there is the opportunity for fathers to request flexible working arrangements. This is governed by the Employment Relations Amendment Act (2007) which prescribes the process employees and employers must follow. Flexible working arrangements are defined in the Act as a variation to working arrangement, related to place of work, hours of work, or days of work, and help ensure employers consider any flexible working request from employees and follow a process to respond to any formal requests, though these can be denied by an employer. This process is important as it forces organisations to take requests seriously and consider them in good faith, and provides employees a course of action if this has not been followed properly (Employment NZ, 2024). Flexible working arrangements may enable working parents to better reconcile paid employment with active involvement in parenting (Chung & van der Lippe, 2020).

While research has looked at fatherhood and how it can interact with the career, this is limited and does not focus on the stories and experiences of hands-on fathers, nor an Aotearoa context. This gap is vital to understand as hands-on parenting from both parties involved has far-reaching benefits for all family members. One of these is that a more equitable arrangement and an increase in fathers' involvement in the day-to-day care of their children could help women build careers and significantly impact the economy in Aotearoa (Westpac, 2021). This may help remove some of the barriers that women face in being seen as the default parent, as well as allow fathers to build better relationships with their children and have more fulfilling parenting experiences

Personal Motivations

As a postgraduate researcher, I also hold a professional role in human resources and am a working parent. In both my professional and personal roles, I have seen how organisational practices can impact employees’ ability to combine work and parenting. As a professional working within a male-dominated industry, I have observed that few fathers use flexibility beyond working from home irregularly, and fewer still take on a primary carer role or take a break longer than the legislated two

weeks when becoming a new parent. In my personal life, my husband wished to take on an involved fathering role, performing much of the care and domestic responsibilities to enable my work and study. In many roles and families, this might not be an option, and this led to an interest in the experiences of fathers and how this would compare to the typical experiences of mothers within their careers. It is hoped that this thesis will contribute to a body of knowledge that pushes for equity in parenting and a society where balancing being the parent most of us want to be and sustaining a meaningful career are not mutually exclusive.

Structure of this thesis

This thesis is divided into five sections. This first chapter introduces the topic of this research and the rationale for why understanding the experiences of the involved father is essential, especially within the context of Aotearoa/ New Zealand. The second chapter critically reviews the existing body of literature on parenting and career, looking first at motherhood and the impacts that mothers face when they become parents, both immediately and over the duration of their careers, before reviewing the existing literature around fatherhood and career. This thesis looks at the traditional role of the father, as well as the father's differing societal and workplace expectations. In chapter four, the philosophical framework for this research will then be outlined, explaining how a qualitative, feminist approach to this research is an appropriate choice to understand better the lived experiences of the research participants and the broader aims and purposes of this study. Chapter five presents the study's findings using five critical themes drawn from the analysis of these experiences: the importance of involved fatherhood, career impacts, minimisation of career impacts, post-pandemic expectations, and what needs to change. Chapter six discusses these findings and how they relate to the existing body of knowledge, particularly highlighting where they may be new or different from those in the existing literature. Finally, the conclusion outlines the implications of this research, the limitations, potential areas for further research, how these fit into a New Zealand context, and possible practical improvements for organisations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction and background

This chapter provides an in-depth overview of the relevant literature on involved fatherhood and careers. It specifically focuses on the impacts of fatherhood on the career and why men hesitate to become involved fathers. Due to a lack of research on fatherhood and the career, this chapter also highlights the experiences of women who traditionally have been the primary carers and have experienced well-researched career impacts. This chapter starts by outlining the background of how the family dynamic has changed over time and why this has happened before moving on to discuss the benefits that come from the involvement of fathers in the care of their children. It then examines the impacts of motherhood on women's careers, the current body of literature around fathers' careers and the impacts of paternity leave and flexible working before discussing some of the fears around involved fatherhood.

The reality of parenting is changing, and increasingly, it is expected that both parents will take a hands-on role in raising their children (Bach, 2015). This is partly due to new expectations, meaning both parents often must contribute financially now (Leonce, 2020). This trend started around the late 20th century when labour market shifts and neo-liberalism meant a focus on individual employment, moving more women to work in paid employment (Hyejin, 2019; Ko & Hwang, 2021). These changes are sometimes referred to as the gender revolution, with some identifying that this started in the 1960s (Raley et al., 2012). By the 1980s dual earner families had increased substantially, with research suggesting that in some Western countries, more than 50% of families had multiple earners (Falkenberg & Monachello, 1990; Gomulka & Stern, 1990). Traditionally, women were seen as primarily responsible for the unpaid work in the household, including the care of children, and men were seen as the source of financial support for the family; however, market shifts caused these ideas to change, and more women to take part

in the labour market (Bach, 2015; Ko & Hwang, 2021). This is partly due to economic changes, increased availability and use of childcare, more available family-friendly policies, and changing expectations for and of mothers (Leonce, 2020).

This change in the working population's makeup has caused a shift in the family dynamic, which contributes to the need for a change in the division of responsibility in domestic labour and responsibilities around childcare (Pinho et al., 2021). To allow for this change in employment and parenting and to help build gender equity, fathers need to take a more hands-on role in childcare and unpaid domestic labour to ensure an equitable division of labour in paid and unpaid work (Bowles et al., 2022). This new parenting style is known as involved fatherhood and is changing society's expectations of fathers (Bach, 2015). Though there is no doubt that many fathers wish to be involved with caring for their children, research suggests it has as much to do with these structural changes in society that men are becoming involved fathers and taking on more of a role in childcare (Bach, 2015). With mothers still currently performing two to three times the childcare responsibilities of men, however, and making more significant career sacrifices, it is clear there is still a long way to go in equity in parenting (Ladge et al., 2015).

Benefits of involved fatherhood

Involved fatherhood refers to fathers who are highly engaged in the active day-to-day care of their children and are accessible and responsive to their emotional, physical, and mental needs (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). This means they go beyond entertaining children to being responsible for feeding, cleaning, and transporting children (Atkinson, 2022). There are many positive impacts to having an equitable division of childcare; therefore, it is beneficial to encourage fathers to be actively involved in raising their children. On a more personal scale, fathers who take on a more active role in childcare have been shown to have better mental and physical health (Bowles et al., 2022). Involved fathers may also be more motivated at work and better able to manage work demands mentally, likely resulting in fewer work-

family conflicts for involved fathers (Ladge et al., 2015). There are also significant benefits to the mothers of children with involved fathers, personally and professionally. Mothers with the support of their involved co-parent are more likely to have good mental health if the fathers are involved from birth, and they may have a more positive outlook on motherhood itself (Twamley et al., 2013). They may find it easier to return to the paid workforce earlier than mothers with less support (Pets, Knoester & Li, 2020). Additionally, there are many benefits for children who have close relationships with both parents, with evidence suggesting that they may be more resilient, experience fewer psychological issues, and have better emotional regulation than those without an involved father figure (Petts, Knoester & Li, 2018; Arslan & Demircioğlu, 2022). However, involvement in fathering impacts more than just the immediate family unit; it also has positive societal implications. Reduction of unpaid work for women may improve gender equality and increase the ability for women to participate in paid work, which brings economic benefits (Petts, Knoester & Li, 2018; Ministry for Women, 2019). For organisations who employ fathers, they are likely to be more satisfied with their work and more committed to the organisation when they are more involved in the care of their family (Bataille & Hyland, 2023), which may help retention and employee engagement.

Motherhood and the career

Research into how careers can be impacted by parenting is vast. However, this is mainly focused on the impacts on mothers due to the traditional views around motherhood and unpaid labour. Women have traditionally been expected to be responsible for raising children and the domestic tasks required for a household, in part due to the view that caring and domestic labour is a feminine task that should sit with women or that women are the experts (Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005). This pressure for women to take on the responsibility for childcare has long impacted their careers (Pinho et al., 2021). While there will be women who want to perform much of the hands-on parenting of their children, there are others for whom societal expectation has pushed them into being the primary caregiver when they may have preferred to focus on their careers. Recently, there has been an increase

in family-friendly policies and paid parental leave availability, and this may have had a positive impact on mothers, reducing their need to choose between motherhood and a career; however, there are still significantly more mothers using these than there are fathers (Westpac, 2021, Yadav & Sharma, 2023; Bataille & Hyland, 2023). The impacts of this on women are extensive, and requiring support such as flexible working practices, parental leave, or part-time hours may mean that mothers experience lower earnings, reduced employment, less access to professional development, and be overlooked when it comes to promotion (Baker, 2012; Lyonette, 2015; Pertold-Gebicka, 2020). Research within the medical profession looking at promotions among parents suggests that the status quo has not changed significantly and that men's likelihood of promotion is not affected by fatherhood; in contrast, women's still are (Morgan et al., 2020). In specific careers, these issues may mean starting over again, where a mother returning to work loses bonuses, portfolios, and chances at career development for a period, impacting their financial security (Halrynjo & Mangset, 2022).

Commitment to family, either real or perceived, means mothers do not usually meet the ideal worker norm. This ideal worker, prized by employers and traditionally based on the idea of a male employee, is committed to work and prioritises work above other areas of their life, such as family and personal time. Thus, the ideal worker works long hours, is highly responsive to unexpected workplace demands, and is 'busy' (Rodriguez Castro et al., 2022; Coron & Garbe, 2023). This idea has persevered, not changing substantially in response to mothers increased paid employment rates (Rodriguez Castro et al., 2022). Research in Australia suggests an intensive mothering ideology demands that mothers give their children their time, money and love freely, creating significant tension for mothers who are also impacted by trying to fit an ideal worker demand (Rodriguez Castro et al., 2022). Mothers are still often subject to gender roles where they are seen as the primary caregiver in a family (Bataille & Hyland, 2023), performing most of the childcare and associated responsibilities. This expectation impacts the work mothers complete outside of work and can mean they reduce their working hours (Pinho et al., 2021). Childcare support has not increased enough to support single-employed parents or dual-income families, so families rely on unpaid help such as family or friends

(Rodriguez Castro et al., 2022). Coordinating and facilitating commutes also falls mainly onto mothers, meaning that before and after work, they are likely to need to coordinate or attend drop-offs and pickups, leaving them with longer, more complex commutes (Rodriguez Castro et al., 2022). Mothers also show significantly more sickness absences when their children are of daycare age, whereas this is not so for fathers; this is likely due to gender differences in the provision of childcare, not health deterioration of mothers (Anjelov et al., 2013; Grönlund & Öun, 2020). These extra responsibilities often lead to mothers balancing work and personal life by reducing hours in paid work or making other career concessions (Mosseri, 2021). The necessity to change working arrangements and make career sacrifices disproportionately impacts mothers of colour or those in lower income brackets, and these mothers may also be more likely to need family support for childcare purposes (Mosseri, 2021).

Due to the extent of these additional commitments, and some of the preconceived ideas about mothers, they are often penalised for being parents with what is known as a motherhood wage penalty (Gao & Tian, 2023). This is not an isolated issue and has been seen and researched across many countries and applies to women regardless of education level, however, it does impact lower-income women more significantly (Gao & Tian, 2023). Research in Nordic countries, where the gender pay gap between non-parents is minimal, has found there is still a significant pay gap when comparing mothers and fathers (Halrynjo & Mangset, 2022). Research has not agreed on the period of this salary impact, with some suggesting that this minimises or disappears as women age; however, other research shows that for mothers with multiple children, this wage penalty may remain, though at a decreased level, until women are in their fifties (Kahn et al., 2014). Though this gap may decrease, the impact is likely to be life-long, as lower wages are usually associated with lower contributions to superannuation schemes, meaning that mothers may end up in vulnerable positions near retirement, particularly where they do not have additional financial assistance (Austen & Mavisakalyan, 2018).

There are several theories around why this motherhood penalty exists, and some suggest that it is due to time taken off to have and care for children through longer-

term parental leave and career breaks, meaning a decrease in applicable work experience. It has also been proposed that the motherhood wage penalty is due to women who plan to become parents putting less effort into training and professional development and choosing occupations where their human capital is less likely to suffer by time out; however, the same research acknowledges that employers may discriminate against mothers and either prefer to hire non-mothers or offer a mother less than they would someone who is childless (Staff & Mortimer, 2012). This wage penalty has also been attributed to women choosing family-friendly occupations that happen to be lower paid (Staff & Mortimer, 2012). Parental leave is another significant contributor to mothers' career challenges, with women taking significantly more parental leave than men (Karu & Tremblay, 2018). This impacts their careers directly and is likely to contribute to unequal responsibility for childcare in the future and other impacts on career and working conditions (Moreno Minguez et al., 2022). Women are also more likely to work part-time and may receive a lower wage and slower career progression (Lyonette, 2015), potentially impacting their future financial stability and their ability to access professional development. Mothers are also less likely to be seen as ideal workers, being judged as less competent, less dependable and more likely to be discriminated against due to this (Correll, et al., 2007). Others indicate a reduction in the motivation and energy that a mother dedicates to work contributes to this wage penalty (Gao & Tian, 2023); however, these research findings may be influenced by factors such as the ideal worker norm. Even in full-time work, the motherhood wage penalty is likely to impact women's financial and career success, and some research suggests this may simply be due to manager attitudes and evaluations (Correll et al., 2007).

Though many issues are faced by mothers who also wish to maintain a career, there have been several ways in which this has improved over the years. With changing expectations of parents and increased participation in paid work by mothers, there have been significant changes in many countries regarding parental leave and job protection, though the length of these is still highly inconsistent (Canaan et al., 2022). Parental leave allows new parents to take the time they need to recover whilst still having confidence that they have a job to return to and financial support for some time (Lalive et al., 2014). There are significant benefits to both families and the economy in facilitating parental leave that keeps parents

connected with paid employment, including potentially higher rates of employment in the future, financial stability, and better health outcomes for family members (Lalive et al., 2014).

Balancing work alongside family responsibilities may be particularly challenging in a time where there is a higher blurring between personal and family time, with the provision of laptops and work phones, meaning employees are expected to have a high level of availability (Yadav & Sharma, 2023). This is where many employers have introduced family-friendly policies that can help support parents. Increasingly flexible working has become a more regular part of many organisations, and this may help parents balance demands that mean they require different hours, locations in which to work, or other flexibility to manage family demands (Yadav & Sharma, 2023). Some organisations may also provide subsidised childcare or extended or additional parental leave (Yadav & Sharma, 2023). This has been shown to help reduce the conflict between work and family, meaning parents may be more satisfied with their employment and personal lives (Yadav & Sharma, 2023). While family-friendly policies are generally available to all parents, they are still underutilised by fathers (Bataille & Hyland, 2023).

Fatherhood and the career

There are many impacts of involved motherhood on the career of women, traditionally the primary carers. However, there is significantly less research on the effects of involved fatherhood on the career. The change in traditional ideas of child-rearing has meant more mothers with young children are returning to full-time employment, contributing to a shift in the care of children (Martínez-Pastor et al., 2024). With this increase in women participating in paid work, there may be a change from solely identifying as a breadwinner with many families having both parents in paid employment. However, though this has been slowly changing, there are still gendered ideals around the responsibilities of men and women both in careers and in unpaid work (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). More recently, many have expected that good fathers will play a more hands-on fathering role, taking on more responsibilities for caring for and nurturing their children (Martínez-Pastor et al.,

2024; Bataille & Hyland, 2023). However, some research suggests that this is still primarily based on play and leisure rather than the caregiving elements of parenting (Diniz et al., 2023). Fathers are also more frequently taking parental leave, as well as, or sometimes, instead of mothers (Berrigan et al., 2020; Byun & Won, 2020). This change may be particularly important to long-term involvement in parenting, as taking on the care of their children is likely to help fathers gain confidence in their ability to parent, and practice is seen as a critical factor in fathers' involvement (Bach, 2015). This may help to improve the relationship with the child, allowing them to relate to both mother and father equally (Duvander & Almqvist, 2014; Bach, 2015). However, the change is slow, and the responsibility taken on by fathers is yet to match that of women (Kotila et al., 2013).

Though men are taking on more responsibility for the care of their children, literature suggests that fewer men are experiencing adverse effects on their careers, as they are not making the career changes that women make (Martínez-Pastor et al., 2024). For example, more men take paternity leave to spend with their children than previously; however, for many, this is a short period of only one to two weeks compared to longer parental leave taken by mothers (Ladge et al., 2015). Indeed, many men may be reluctant to take even that period of leave for fear of the impression that this may give their employer or those they work with and impact their status (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). This is despite changing policies and legislation in many countries, which means fathers should increasingly have the opportunity to take leave to care for their babies and young children (Byun & Won, 2020). Other research, however, suggests that fathers want to take up more of a role in parenting even if they do have to make career sacrifices (Zhelyazkova & Ritschard, 2018). However, increases in parental leave and family-friendly, flexible work practices do not always mean easy access nor an immediate change in social or professional attitudes toward active fathers, particularly those in minority groups (Petts, Knoester & Li, 2018). There are still significantly more women using flexible leave policies for childcare purposes, taking parental leave or taking a break from paid work to raise their families (Chung & van der Lippe, 2020; Westpac, 2021; Hayes & Levine, 2023). This shows that something still needs to change for fathers to take advantage of these practices and become hands-on, involved parents.

It is clear there are many benefits for families to having men take on a more equal share of childcare, however, there are still fewer men taking on a significant amount of this unpaid labour. There is not yet clear research that explains why childcare responsibilities are still imbalanced and why men seem not to be contributing to unpaid work the same way that women do. However, insight can be gleaned from research on other aspects of fatherhood and men's traditional careers. One possible explanation revolves around the social expectations of men and alignment with the ideal worker norm. As mentioned above, this ideal worker norm, which prizes those who are readily available and highly focused on their work, putting it before other areas of their lives, has traditionally been based on the picture of an ideal male worker (Coron & Garbe, 2023). These employees tend to have a more linear career path and are more associated with “building a career” (Coron & Garbe, 2023). There is a lot of research on this norm and its impact on women's careers; however, this ideal does not just disadvantage women, and there is some question whether this may also be an issue for men who are looking to deviate from this norm, becoming more involved fathers, and prioritising this more highly than their careers (Coron & Garbe, 2023). Research in Korea has shown a strong ideology around the ideal worker standard and strong gender norms (Byun & Won, 2020). While there has been an increase in fathers actively participating in childcare, these fathers have experienced social stigma within and external to the workplace, and they may experience negative impacts from deviating from the ideal breadwinner role (Byun & Won, 2020). Additionally, some fathers may have a lowered career identity, possibly meaning less connection to their careers (Ladge et al., 2015). This may be impacted by organisational factors, however, indicating that experiences within the workplace are essential to managing both fatherhood and career (Ladge et al., 2015). Fathers who start to break away from the ideal worker norm may end up experiencing many of the same disadvantages that women previously have, including discrimination and backlash for their involvement in childcare (Bowles et al., 2022).

Some research on fatherhood and career finds positive impacts of fatherhood for men too. While these do not consider the involvement levels of the father, there is some suggestion that males who have children may be hired over their peers who

do not have children or receive a wage premium above them (Hodges & Budig, 2010). This may be due to a perception of fathers as more stable and reliable than non-fathers, though some research suggests this is due to increased effort or productivity at work when a man becomes a father (Hodges & Budig, 2010; Mari, 2019). These career benefits have been shown regardless of career choice, though the effect is most pronounced amongst white, married males in higher salary brackets and typically those in white-collar professions (Hodges & Budig, 2010; Miller, 2014). Much of the current literature on fatherhood and career does not consider deviation from the ideal worker and that fathers are becoming more involved in childcare and may prioritise their families in much the same way as mothers. It is currently unknown if this benefit occurs when fathers require formal flexibility for childcare or if they take extended parental leave. It is also controversial in the literature, with other studies not finding evidence of any wage premium for fathers (Mari, 2019). Fatherhood has other benefits within organisations, and it has been shown to help men form stronger bonds with their colleagues, enabling them to build relationships with other fathers in their organisations (Ladge et al., 2015). Again, it is unknown how involvement with children impacts this dynamic. Another benefit may be an increase in job satisfaction, as there has been a correlation between this and time spent with children, indicating that there may be positive career impacts to active fathering (Ladge et al., 2015). Though there are some known positive impacts of fatherhood on careers, some adverse effects have also been explored.

There has been a significant increase in family-friendly workplace policies as a response to changing demands from parents and an increased demand from fathers to be more involved (Balan et al., 2023). These policies include flexible work, expanded parental leave, child care assistance and other alternative work arrangements (Yadav & Sharma, 2023; Boteach et al., 2023). These policies may help to facilitate work-life balance, a decrease in role conflict and employee engagement (Yadav & Sharma, 2023). These family-friendly policies may help minimise some of the career sacrifices parents have traditionally made. However, just having these policies does not mean that they are being taken up, and some research even shows a weak relationship between the provision of and the utilisation of these policies (Vyas et al., 2017). Organisational culture and leadership

support also significantly impact the use of family-friendly policies (Zhelyazkova & Ritschard, 2018). Research in Germany suggests that these policies are more readily available, yet the outcome is that involved fatherhood is still more of a goal than a reality for many fathers (Balan et al., 2023). Some of this gap here may be around the actual attitudes of these companies and whether the policies represent the attitudes toward involved fatherhood (Balan et al., 2023). When looking at the utilisation of these policies and, more broadly, involvement in child-raising, there is some evidence that men fear the social impacts of being too involved. In some more patriarchal societies, men have expressed fear of the social implications of being involved in the care of their children at all (Byun & Won, 2020). In workplaces, this is expressed as the fear that they will be seen as less dedicated to work and even less masculine if they are involved parents, and this has led to some men not wanting to take on a significant share of the parenting responsibility (Byun & Won, 2020). This is also shown in comments outside the workplace, where men experience negative attitudes from those who do not understand or agree with being an active father (Ladge et al., 2015). These attitudes may leave fathers feeling discriminated against and may be partly why many men are still not taking any significant paternity leave or flexible working (Ladge et al., 2015).

Paternity leave is a more researched area of flexible work for fathers. Taking paternity leave has been correlated to fathers' higher levels of ongoing involvement in raising their children (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). Yet, research has shown that men are less likely to take parental leave than women, even if paid parental leave is available to them (Hayes & Levine, 2023). Though those who have a partner who is more highly educated or fathers working within the public sector are significantly more likely to take this (Zhelyazkova & Ritschard, 2018). Parental leave is likely to predict fathers' involvement later in their children's lives and is an important step toward learning how to be a father (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). According to some, the decision on whether to take this leave may be related to their manager's and supervisors' attitudes toward them taking leave. This has been backed up by research that outlines that men who take leave may experience harassment and other negative social impacts to a greater degree than those fathers who have a more traditional level of involvement with their children (Hayes & Levine, 2023). Some of these fathers also speak of the expectation of negative impacts on their

careers when they return to work (Hayes & Levine, 2023). In contrast, other men explain that they do not use parental leave to keep their image based on work rather than fatherhood in the workplace (Ladge et al., 2015).

In patriarchal societies, there is often significant gender segregation in roles, traits, and occupations. These gendered labels mean socially guided ways of acting, dependent on one's gender. Individuals who wish to perform roles that are not traditionally aligned with their gender are disadvantaged, and this can lead to marginalisation and discrimination. This is stronger in cultures where there is a strong ideology of hegemonic masculinity, in which men are seen as socially dominant in society. In these societies, masculine identity can be strongly tied to the career and alignment with norms around the career, pinned around the identity of being fully committed to work, available, and with high levels of presenteeism (Balan et al., 2023). Research in the US, a society with more hegemonic masculinity, suggested that men who are affected more by threats to their masculinity are less likely to be involved in household or childcare work (Kaplan & Offer, 2020). Care responsibilities being taken on by men may mean they do not meet the societal ideal for the masculine identity and may experience this marginalisation and discrimination (Ladge et al., 2015). Those who perform part-time or flexible hours may be seen as less masculine and have their commitment to their careers in question (Balan et al., 2023). Men have outlined this as one reason they do not wish to be more involved fathers, with some research suggesting these men may prefer not to be seen as fathers within the workplace and judged based on their profession or work (Ladge et al., 2015). They may experience the typical devaluing women have experienced and possibly even more due to being male (Balan et al., 2023). This can mean lower pay, limited growth in the career, and being seen as less committed or loyal (Balan et al., 2023). This is particularly prevalent in countries highly tied to traditional behaviours and has been shown in attitudes from peers, supervisors and the media. Even where family-friendly policies exist, these are often tokenistic and do not reflect men's experiences utilising these. Research has also shown that supervisors may reinforce gender role conformance to dissuade their employees from taking parental leave and other flexible work (Hennekam et al., 2023). This gender conformity persists in framing men in the traditional breadwinner role and hinders genuine change for fathers wanting to be

more involved (Balan et al., 2023). However, there has been an increase in the prevalence of the ideology of caring masculinities, which revolves around placing a higher value on caring and nurturing work, previously seen as the realm of women (Balan et al., 2023). This form of masculinity is likelier to shy away from the previously valued dominant aspects of masculinity and support involved fatherhood more (Balan et al., 2023). This may indicate a change coming; however, currently, this still leaves men with the ability to choose their involvement in parenting, a choice less available to mothers, maintaining an unequal power balance (Balan et al., 2023).

Men may also experience barriers to taking leave or becoming involved fathers in their workplaces due to these entrenched gender norms. While more organisations offer parent supportive policies and opportunities, this is not true for all (Ladge et al., 2015). Due to the feeling of limited policies supporting them, men may feel that they have limited options to be active fathers (Ladge et al., 2015). These strong gender-conforming norms may mean difficulty breaking out of these roles for involved fathering (Ladge et al., 2015). Many organisations have been slow to support involved fathers and parental support policies, or considerations to them (Ladge et al., 2015). Adherence to gender norms may even come from other parents in the workplace, with research in France showed that supervisors who had utilised the family-friendly policies prior were often responsible for putting barriers in place for fathers below them in their organisations (Hennekam et al., 2023). This usually consisted of informal social obstacles such as unjustified reasoning around why the request will not practically work and warnings about negative career impacts (Hennekam et al., 2023). This can lead men to opt for more informal or stealth parenting flexibility if they require it, due to fear of being targets of restructures and layoffs in cases where they may be seen as involved fathers and not aligning with gender norms (Ladge et al., 2015). This can make it challenging to measure these policies' effectiveness or properly support fathers trying to balance work and family. This is consistent with findings in other countries that show, even in organisations with seemingly more progressive father-friendly policies, this may be more for show, whereas informally, there can be a culture that pushes traditional gender norms (Balan et al., 2023).

The potential career impacts of active fathering in the workplace are likely to replicate, to some degree, those that happen in broader society. The societal view of childcare as feminine may impact the involvement of men in the hands-on care of their children due to the social and occupational impacts of not aligning with masculine norms. These masculine norms guide what is seen as acceptable male behaviour toward being a work-focused financial earner and provider, alongside less family-specific behaviours such as competitiveness and winning, dominance, and self-reliance which may all play into a drive to prioritise career and progression (Wong et al., 2017). Hegemonic masculinity is still dominant in many countries, and this can impact men when they deviate from the expected role, meaning men may experience discrimination and marginalisation (Ladge et al., 2015). This may mean similar experiences to those of many women, including impacts such as being passed by for promotions and being seen as less committed to work than family responsibilities or as an outsider due to family commitments.

Research on this topic outlines that fathers may experience more significant work-family conflict than mothers and that this may lead to adverse outcomes for their careers (Ladge et al., 2015). Research looking into men's attitudes toward involved fathering suggests that many men agree with this and believe that they are disadvantaged even more than women have historically been by being involved fathers and taking parental leave (Byun & Won, 2020). The higher visibility of men taking leave, when compared with women, was blamed for this, as it is seen as more natural for women, and unpaid or extended leave is often blended into maternity leave, hiding it more from organisational scrutiny (Byun & Won, 2020). This disparity between the written policies and how men are seen if they utilise them may be because many organisations create family-friendly policies and promote gender equality to be seen as good, caring employers rather than being genuine in attempts to create an equitable environment (Balan, van den Brink,& Benschop, 2023). The negative impacts of men taking parental leave or utilising flexible work may be tempered in the right organisational environment, and this supports the idea that organisations and culture may impact how a father balances career and family (Ladge et al., 2015). Equality and opportunity for fathers to be more involved are likely to require a focus on genuine structural change rather than a quick-fix policy

or an individual focus (Balan et al., 2023). This means understanding what is needed to support fathers and mothers rather than just adding fathers to existing organisational policies and breaking down some of the long-held gendered beliefs around caring for children and domestic labour (Balan et al., 2023).

Why this research is needed

Research is limited on the topic of involved fatherhood and their careers. Some suggest that this may be due to the low numbers of men making significant changes to their work schedules. However, an alternative suggestion is that it will likely have more to do with gendered structures in society and organisations. There is currently a gap in the research around the men who are taking part in the hands-on care of their children and the impact this has on their careers—even less is known about the impacts and causes in a specifically New Zealand context, impacting the ability to support New Zealand fathers in taking active parenting roles. We do not yet understand if men, as a broad categorisation, want to change these norms and why those who do not conform to traditional norms have chosen to do so. There are many benefits to families with involved fathers and broader society, as covered earlier in this chapter. For men to take on an equal portion of the care of their children and make the career changes necessary to be involved fathers, understanding the impact on their careers, their families and what support might be available to them will be important.

Therefore, this thesis aims to give a voice to fathers who are balancing their family responsibilities while trying to maintain meaningful careers using flexible work practices. It is hoped that the findings of this research may help fathers to feel more confident to make an informed choice on balancing career and parenting, providing more certainty in presenting their identities as fathers to their place of employment, and be more comfortable utilising flexible work practices to be an involved parent. It may also help organisations understand the impacts of structured support for their

fathers and help them put this in place effectively in a way that works for this group specifically.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the current literature on the traditional background of care in the family and the impacts this had on mothers. It then described the current understanding of involved fatherhood, how parenting may impact careers, why involved fatherhood is still rare, and the potential benefits of increasing this to parents and wider society. The role of both men and women in the paid workplace and parenting is still impacted by traditional gender norms around work and childcare (Gaunt, 2013; Lersch et al., 2017) and this research aims to understand the experience of fathers taking a more hands-on role in childcare and going against these traditional gender norms. This will allow for a better understanding of any impacts on fathers' careers and how organisations and broader society can support more fathers in taking on an involved role in parenting, over time working to change these traditional gender norms. It is hoped that this will contribute to better enabling women to have the opportunity for more choice in the way in which they balance work and family, as well as more successful careers, and allowing families the many benefits of having both parents involved and hands-on in their care and upbringing. More clarity is needed regarding the understanding of involved fathers' experiences in the workplace and how this impacts them personally and professionally. There is also a significant gap around involved fatherhood in the context of Aotearoa.

This chapter discusses the philosophical frameworks of the study that support the research that seeks to answer the question, "What are the career experiences of involved fathers in Aotearoa, New Zealand?". To conduct this study, the research design needed to be guided by a solid philosophical framework that ensured that it was purposeful and would accurately and appropriately gain the information that would inform the findings ethically. This research has been guided by an ontological approach of relativism, a feminist epistemology, a critical paradigm and a feminist methodology, emphasising the importance of the individual's personal story in this research and its goals of creating social change and equity in the domestic and paid

workspaces. It used semi-structured interviews to gather these stories and thematic analysis for data interpretation. This chapter outlines these factors in relation to this research before discussing the data collection and analysis methods.

Research Approach

One of the first guiding decisions of this research was whether to take a quantitative or qualitative approach. This decision changes the research structure as each strongly relates to different ontologies, paradigms, epistemologies, research questions, topics, and methodologies (Asghar, 2013). Quantitative methodologies may tend toward a positivist approach that quantifies information and believes that questions can all be answered using scientific methods, proving or disproving theories (Walliman, 2017). The advantages of taking this approach are that this would have allowed for a more significant number of participants and possibly a more generalisable outcome; however, there is a lack of depth in understanding stories, social relationships and nuances in much quantitative research (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002).

In contrast, qualitative research is argued by many as more appropriate for social research and understanding the experiences and stories of participants through language (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). It acknowledges that the lived experiences of individuals will change their views of their reality (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002; Dupuis et al., 2022). This also allows for an approach that recognises the researcher's influence and how their background and experiences impact this (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research, is therefore, an appropriate choice for this research, which seeks to understand the experiences of involved fathers in their careers and the impacts of this. It is an approach that works well because qualitative data can be based on individual stories and experiences and allows for the understanding that each participant will have their own experience of reality and that these experiences are valid expressions of their own experiences in that specific context. This research is created around the goal of understanding the experiences of involved fathers and hopes that this will contribute to a body of

knowledge that will impact the support available to them, which will make it easier for fathers to be more involved in the hands-on care of their children, whilst still being able to progress in their careers.

Philosophical frameworks and research paradigms are difficult to conceptualise and yet essential to understand as a guide to conducting research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). A relativist ontology, feminist epistemology, and a critical paradigm guided this research. It is important to understand the philosophical framework before undertaking the research to guide the direction and design of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The relativist ontology sits on the subjectivist rather than the objectivist side of the scale, looking at the nature of reality as contextual and understanding that everyone may have different experiences and, thus, realities (Morgan & Smircich, 1980). Relativism has been chosen to develop research with a deeper understanding of the importance of experiences and their impact on fathers within the workplace, even where they may not be seen or experienced by others. Realism is considered unsuitable for this research due to the focus on individual experiences and a more inductive approach.

Epistemology is a framework that outlines how knowledge is created, what knowledge is valid and how it exists within wider knowledge systems (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002; Lykke, 2010). This research will take the approach of a feminist epistemology. This epistemology looks at how knowledge is created and the impact that gender and other factors around power relations can have on both the process and the outcome (Grasswick, 2011). Feminist epistemology has typically been used by feminist scholars who may see the traditional scientific method approach as patriarchal in the way it defines what may be asked and how (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). Feminist research also differs from traditional research in how it sees the role of the researcher, seeing that they are more ethically and morally responsible for their research, and that researchers are not neutral parties (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002; Gabor, 2022). In doing this, feminist research often involves looking at less dominant groups, intersectionality and those who are often not as well represented in the existing body of knowledge and literature, with the

aim of better understanding how power structures and gender relations impact lives (Harding, 2008).

In the case of this research, a feminist approach supports the aim to understand how fathers, typically men, are impacted by involved fatherhood; this is seen as a traditionally feminine task, and men have typically been pushed toward the breadwinner identity rather than being involved in the care of children, and this has even been seen as unmasculine (Byun & Won, 2020; Ladge et al., 2015). This pressure to conform to a certain way of acting and prescribed gender norms means this is an appropriate topic for a feminist lens. Both men and women are impacted by gender roles and the dominant norms around masculinity and fatherhood. Better understanding and building knowledge around how to support fathers to be involved may help to create change and allow for more equity in the care of families, as well as in the employment space.

A paradigm is a generally accepted set of guiding beliefs and principles that help guide research and understanding of the world (Walliman, 2017). Understanding paradigms is essential to research as it will help guide the research to an appropriate question and methods to investigate the issue, naturally leading to an appropriate data analysis. The critical paradigm sees research as influenced by external factors and incorporates the researcher's and participants' values and beliefs and the context in which it sits (Asghar, 2013). This paradigm views traditional research paradigms and knowledge systems as biased against marginalised groups and strives for equity, believing that research should cause social change goals (Asghar, 2013). This was appropriate for the research conducted as it has a core goal of understanding the impacts of power on parenting arrangements and helping create a movement toward social change. This is both due to the perspective of helping fathers to have the opportunity to be more involved without detriment to their careers and to encourage fathers to become more involved parents which is beneficial for all members of the family unit, as well as at a wider societal level.

Methodology

This qualitative research seeks to understand the participants through their own stories (Fossey et al., 2002). Rather than taking a deductive approach, looking to prove a theory by quantifying information, this research looks to learn from the data gathered in a way that allows the voices of the participants to be heard and let them guide the research findings.

The methodology further guides the research design, by underpinning the research with strong theoretical assumptions and how these shape the research question and the process of collecting data (Giddings & Grant, 2002). This research will take a feminist qualitative approach. Feminist methodologies came about due to concerns about the limitations of traditional and particularly positivist methodologies (Naples, 2007). There has been much criticism from feminists of how positivist methodologies may reduce the complexity of issues and disconnect them, limiting understanding of the broader social picture (Naples, 2007). Feminist methodologies aim to take a more holistic view of a social issue and consider the factors behind this, such as intersectionality, politics and power (Naples, 2007). This is appropriate for this research and aligns with the philosophical frameworks outlined (maybe add in here #ontology, #epistemology etc) and with the purpose of the research, which is to understand the experience of fathers who have taken a more active role in their children's lives and how this impacts their career to understand how fathers can be supported to take on more childcare, reducing inequalities between parents, and allowing mothers, who traditionally have been seen as the primary caregiver, to dedicate more focus to their careers, should they wish to do so.

Data Collection

Interviews are an effective way to gather data that is rich in information, and this is appropriate for feminist research that is looking to understand experiences and

stories (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). Interviews allow researchers to delve into the participants' experiences and gain a strong understanding of their thoughts and feelings as well as gain knowledge about the broader context (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019), potentially gaining knowledge of areas that other types of data collection may struggle with due to their interactive nature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interviews were seen as an appropriate method over other methods, such as questionnaires, as it allowed the researcher to follow up on any particularly interesting or relevant pieces of information that seemed to impact the participants more. It is also seen as more appropriate than more public forms of research, such as focus groups. This form of data collection involves multiple participants in one group discussing a topic or theme and their opinions of it (Walliman, 2017). This was considered less appropriate due to the need for in-depth information about each individual experience. Given the possibility of organisations being named, the additional confidentiality was also preferred so that participants felt comfortable discussing their experiences, given the sensitivity of discussions around employment. Interviews allow for a deeper dive into individual experiences. Interviews are a preferable data collection method for confidentiality reasons with sensitive topics (Brinkmann, 2020). This topic may be sensitive to the participants and involve a discussion of their current employer, meaning that confidentiality is likely essential to participants. This method also aligns well with feminist research, with some outlining that interactive forms of data collection may be the most appropriate for feminist research (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002).

Three main types of interviews are structured, semi-structured and unstructured (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Structured interviews mean a prescribed set of questions throughout the interview; this allows for an interview that is more replicable, may require less experience, and answers can be compared more easily (Mueller & Segal, 2014). This is closer to quantitative interviewing, which has been seen as more like a survey through an interview. Though there are benefits to structured interviewing, more flexibility was desired for this research to follow up on important points or information that needed clarifying, making it incompatible with the research question. Unstructured interviews sit on the other end of the spectrum of interviews, and these tend to start with a single question or theme, and then the interview goes in the direction the participant takes it (Rubin & Rubin 2005). This helps give the

participant complete control and provides a good understanding of the general theme (Rubin & Rubin 2005). However, in this research, there was specific information that the research question needed to gain broader understanding such as an understanding of the unique impacts of fatherhood in each organisation, and in-depth information about what involved fatherhood meant to each family. To gather this information, the research used open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews to collect data. This allowed the researcher to guide the topic and delve further into areas that seemed particularly important to the participant or relevant to the research (Brinkmann, 2020). A base set of questions was asked; however, the participant was also able to influence the direction of the interview. The interviews were one-on-one to encourage an environment of trust and lead to more open answers from the participants (Brinkmann, 2020). This also allowed for more effective interviewing online, which was the preference for participants.

Participants

There were twelve participants in total. To take part in the research, the participants all needed to meet the following criteria:

- Identify as fathers.
- This may include biological fathers, stepfathers, or other parenting relationships.
- Perceive themselves as heavily involved in their children's lives.
- They required flexible work practices from their employers.
- Examples include extended paternity leave, flexibility in work times or location due to childcare responsibilities.
- This did not need to be current but utilised during their parenting journey due to their responsibilities as parents.

The participants were recruited through social media posts, contact with relevant organisations such as daycares and parenting organisations and snowball sampling, which allowed the participants to recommend the research to other eligible parties (Wahyuni, 2012; Ruel, Wagner & Gillespie, 2016). This was due to

the likelihood that involved fathers would be involved with organisations such as parenting centres, play centres, daycares, and other relevant parenting organisations and make connections with other involved parents through these organisations. This was also done with the intention of reducing the researcher's connection to the participants by creating links that were not through workplace or personal connections. This was thought to be more ethical due to the potentially sensitive nature of content around family and workplace relationships.

The first step to recruitment was to send the information to the highlighted organisations to ask them to publicise this to their members through relevant channels such as social media, newsletters, or events. It was also suggested that the researcher could come in if that was beneficial and discuss this with relevant people. These advertisements were also shared via social channels such as LinkedIn and shared with professional networks. Additionally, an altered form of snowball sampling was undertaken during which relevant contacts who met the criteria but were too closely linked to the researcher to take part in the research ethically were asked if they could tell anyone they felt would be interested in the research.

The participants recruited were all based in New Zealand. They resided mainly in the Auckland area, with only two participants living in other regions of New Zealand. The participants were mostly from professional or white-collar occupations where they could perform their roles remotely, at times or completely. All participants had children school-age or younger who still required high levels of supervision and care. The majority of participants were in dual-earner families. This is shown in a simplified version in table one which shows the participants occupations and the responsibility they hold for childcare.

Table One: Participant occupation and division of childcare responsibilities.

Participant	Division of childcare	Occupation
Brendon	Shared	Management
Aaron	Shared	Research
Preet	Shared	Administration
Natt	Shared	Business Development
Sam	Shared	Business Owner
Craig	Shared	Engineering
Jeff	Shared	Academia
Brad	Sole Custody	Project management
Harold	Shared	Academia
Kurt	Shared	Senior Management
Max	Shared	Academia
Andrew	Shared	Management

Notes:

Shared indicated this was shared with a partner or spouse

Sole Custody indicates that no other party shared primary responsibility for children at the time of interview

The interviews took place over two months and were conducted via online conferencing software such as Zoom and Teams. The interviews took forty-five minutes to an hour and a half to complete. This was guided by the content that the participant wished to cover and their availability. Interviews started by providing information about the study and the opportunity for participants to ask any questions, as well as a reminder that they could stop or withdraw from the study at any time before the completion and release of the research. After the data collection, the transcription process was completed using transcription software with manual correction.

Data Analysis

The research used reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to analyse the interviews in a more inductive manner using Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2019) six-step approach to thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has been a long-standing method for qualitative analysis; however, it has often been poorly understood and implemented. More recently this method has become clearer with RTA emerging from the work of Braun and Clarke. This is an appropriate method for this piece of research as it is a flexible approach that applies to research looking into personal experience (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2019). Additionally, it provides a more guided approach to performing analysis and this is more appropriate for research undertaken by less experienced researchers, as in this case (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The six steps of this method were followed as follows: the first step was familiarisation with the data, during which the transcripts of the interviews were reviewed multiple times to become familiar with them as an overall data set. This is an essential stage to becoming familiar with the ins and outs of the data and was closely followed by the coding stage, during which codes were created from the data that helped to answer the research question. Relevant data was then tagged with these codes. The next stage was the generation of initial themes, which were based on the coding generated in the previous stage and collated into similar themes. The next stage involved taking the themes and comparing them back to the original data, ensuring that they were adequately representative and tweaking them where necessary. After this, the final changes to the themes were made, ensuring they had a clear meaning that encompassed the codes and clear naming that properly communicated this meaning. Finally, these results were written up and included in the findings section.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted through the Master of Business programme at AUT University and has gone through the Ethics approval process outlined by the AUT ethics committee (AUTEC) which applies to all research that involves human or animal participants. As a part of the design of this research, therefore, the safety of

participants, both physically and psychologically, was of paramount importance. Due to the location where this research took place, Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Tiriti o Waitangi was considered within the design of the research. Partnership, participation and protection are areas key to the design of this research and have been considered at all stages to ensure the minimisation of risk for participants and that the research contributes value to society by representing the interests of the groups, its findings affect, as discussed next.

Participation has been implemented by ensuring that participants take part in the research in a fully informed way. Informed consent is when enough information is given to make an informed choice to participate (Walliman, 2017). This was completed by providing all information to the participants before they participated in the form of an information sheet, providing the opportunity to ask questions before taking part, and informing them clearly of their rights to withdraw from the study before, during and after taking part. Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, participation was also ensured by allowing participants room to guide the research through their answers, which consequently impacted the findings. This means they were indeed able to tell their own stories in a way that covered the topics important to them.

Protection is another key element of how Te Tiriti o Waitangi is interpreted and considered within research. There were several ways in which this was considered in both the design of the study and throughout the data collection. One way this was enacted was to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was protected. Given the nature of the research and the vulnerable conversations around the treatment of fathers in their workplaces, there was potential for those who took part to experience negative impacts if confidentiality was not protected. This is more significant due to the small size of Aotearoa, so information needed to be portrayed in a way that meant people outside of the research team could not be identified through their answers in the study. This meant removing or changing all names, and that of any organisations that may have come up, to reduce the risk of identification. This is evidenced in the participant demographics summary table above, which only indicates broad industry rather than the specific occupation of the participants.

Other areas where protection needed to be considered were in terms of emotional harm. This is considered unlikely as, though the topic is potentially sensitive, the participants were able to share their stories in a way that they were happy with and were invited to pause, stop or withdraw at any time if they felt that would be better for them. Participants were also only able to take part if they were not currently in an active professional relationship with the researcher nor a member of the researcher's family. This means that those who were presently employed by the organisation where the researcher currently works could not participate.

Partnership is also considered when incorporating Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles into research and, during the creation of this research, there was an emphasis on the motivation behind the study. This motivation was to understand and encourage equal opportunity to access both career and family life for all. This was the reason that a focus on understanding the stories and experiences of the participants was vital, and seeking to gain a deeper understanding of the working father experience, meant that fathers were active participants in guiding the findings of the research, collecting this data in a semi-structured interview meant that participants would have more chance to talk about the areas that they felt were important rather than just answering the questions that were asked, while not feeling they were able to tell their whole story. It was reinforced to participants that all contributions were of value and that there were no expectations from the interviewer about the type of stories and answers that the participants would provide. This was done to minimise the risk of participants responding in either a socially desirable way or answering what they thought the researcher wanted to hear.

Summary

This chapter summarises the approach taken toward this research, including the theoretical assumptions that underpin its design and the process followed during its completion. This included details about the recruitment of participants, the semi-structured nature of the interviewing process, why this was considered important,

and the method of analysis for the data gained. It then moves on to discuss the ethical considerations that were taken into account with this research, with a particular focus on Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Participation, active protection, and partnership have been used to guide this research to be more culturally safe in the Aotearoa context. This research has been guided by its methodology, and the findings provide insight into the experiences of involved fathers in the workplace and better understand what this might look like in the workplace, any ongoing impacts on the career, and how organisations can help minimise these negative effects for fathers, in order to help the move to a society that is more accepting of involved fatherhood. These findings will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

This research sought to understand fathers' experiences who required flexible work practices to balance paid employment with involved care of children. To understand this, interviews were held with twelve fathers who self-identified as involved parents. This chapter outlines the results of this research and the final themes that arose. The first section of this is an overview of involved fatherhood, its importance to participants, and the types of flexible work that helped enable this. This is followed up by a discussion of the five key themes emerging from the data: what involved fatherhood means; perceived care impacts of involved fatherhood; organisational support for fathers; post-pandemic effects of flexible work; and what needs to change to enable involved fatherhood.

The participants, their fatherhood and flexible work

Twelve participants took part in this research, all of whom resided in New Zealand and were currently raising children in their teenage years or younger. This meant all experiences were current, and participants were not able to share experiences of long-term career impacts but instead focused on how their need for flexibility was currently impacting them. Participants were also from corporate and academic roles, with many of them in mid-level to senior roles.

Though all fathers perceived themselves as highly involved, they each had different perspectives on what ‘involved fatherhood’ means or entails. This varied based on contextual factors such as whether the other parent was involved, employment type, and ages of children. There was significant discussion around elements of participation in childcare and the associated unpaid domestic tasks that fathers saw as involved in fatherhood. To participants, involvement broadly meant being responsible for a significant amount of the activities of daily living for their children this included areas such as:

- Bathing and dressing children
- Food preparation and mealtimes
- Passive and active supervision of children
- Caring for ill children
- Complementary care tasks such as transportation.

For others, the addition of some parental leave was also included, for some meaning an extended period during which they took on the majority of the care, and for one father, sole custody, meaning responsibility for the listed cares, alongside all planning and other required domestic work.

To take part in this research, participants also needed to work flexibly in some way due to fatherhood. Flexibility and particularly combinations of this looked different for each participant however, broadly fit into the categories represented in table two below, with some participants using multiple flexibility types:

Table Two: Flexible work practices and use

Flexible work practice	**Brief explanation**	**Participants who used it**
Parental leave	Leave taken beyond that which was taken (if any) at the birth of a child or taken later to become the primary caregiver.	Brendon Aaron Andrew Brendon Natt Sam
Part-time work	Reduction of hours per week below the hours considered standard full-time at the participant's employer.	Craig Jeff Natt
WFH or other remote arrangements	Work from home, with the same expectations of performance and attendance as those working in the office or an alternative agreed location away from the main office.	Brad Harold Preet Sam Kurt Jeff Max Natt Craig Aaron Brendon Andrew
Non-standard hours	Working a full-time role but with non-standard work hours to varying degrees e.g. mornings and evenings to allow for school transportation and care	Craig Harold Brad Sam Kurt Jeff Andrew
Other	Unique arrangements specific to an individual	Kurt Jeff

Flexibility was utilised in different ways by fathers, as shown in table two, in order to be more involved with their children. One father outlined being the sole parent to four children due to custody arrangements, this was the only case in which parenting was not a shared responsibility and involved being fully responsible for

the childcare while balancing full-time employment. This required a significant amount of flexibility, particularly when balancing school hours, as Brad explained:

> *I now pick and choose… when I go into the office and when I don't. So that allows me the flexibility to ... get the kids ready in the morning and work with them about going to school and then dropping them off. Then I can come into the office …and.. leave at about …1:30….Pick the… youngest kids up from school and the other kids return a bit later. Once they get dropped off by the bus, so.. [that will] allow me to have a reasonable block of time in the office…but also ..[sending]…the kids to off to school, and then when they come home from school, setting them up for dinner and homework and off to bed. (Brad)*

All other fathers were in partnerships with the birth parent of their children and so had more of a division in responsibilities, with both parents involved in the care.

The amount and types of care provided by fathers varied based on the ages of the children, the child's needs and stage. When children were young, involved fatherhood was described in different stages. In the beginning, there was discussion of supporting the birthing parent, mainly if there was a difficult birth or other complications, and taking on the elements of physical care. This was felt to be more challenging while babies were very young and breastfeeding frequently, and some parents outlined this stage more revolved around supporting the other parent. For some, this was thought to be okay, and the mother was the primary caregiver for the first while, not just due to social constructs but biological norms:

> *Also mindful of these things that she could… only do in the early phases like breastfeeding and things like that. So, I wanted to also do what I could to, support her and to support him. (Brendon)*

Later on, when babies were either not breastfeeding or doing so less frequently, fathers described taking on more physical care, with some outlining that they took over being the primary carer for a period while the birthing parent returned to work or study. Some fathers added that they would prefer to be a stay-at-home father. Once both parents returned to work or study, the primary way in which fathers defined their involvement was around the physical elements of caring. This included

supervision of the child/ren, both passive and active, and some discussion around the provision of basic activities of daily living. Less tangible tasks such as research and planning for family activities, medical appointments and other areas were mentioned by a small number of participants; however, even then, this was an area that seemed to sit with the mother typically:

> *So, I mean, an average day I'd be up in the morning at 6:00 in the morning. Umm, getting the kids breakfast, getting them dressed. Hopefully having time to start their lunches…But probably more often than not, that forced my wife to do the lunch portion…But yeah, I'm typically first up doing all that kind of stuff, and if they are waking in the night, my wife really struggles to get back to sleep, whereas I can immediately fall asleep so most of the time I can get up, do what needs to get done, deal with the kids. (Preet).*

Participants generally felt that equality in parenting was improving substantially. Many of the fathers were able to identify colleagues and friends who parented in more traditional ways; however, they identified that the majority of the fathers they associated with were more involved in hands-on parenting. One father, Natt, identified that this may be partially due to a demand for more equality from mothers:

> *I think, yeah, I think especially like females are now...expecting the males to do more and maybe you know... holding us to account a bit more. (Natt)*

The type of involvement was impacted by the age and stage of children, and this influenced the kind of flexibility used by fathers. One flexibility type discussed by several participants was taking parental leave at the birth of their children or at the time that their partner returned to work. Though none of the fathers took the majority of the parental leave, some took longer breaks of up to several months. Fathers who took some form of parental leave outlined doing this to support the birthing parent during the healing period, take the time to adjust to life with a newborn and bond with their baby. Some also took extended leave during the birth parents' transition back to work. These fathers identified that the return to work was an important and challenging time for the other partner and also discussed that it allowed for that extra time at home for the child before attending daycare and being away from their parents. Brendon spoke to this below:

I planned to take about three or four weeks off, but I took eight at that time. And then also, at the I think nine-month mark, my wife went back to work, and I swapped over and was the primary carer for three months, as well (Brendon)

This was not, however, consistent across all fathers. Several fathers described having taken parental leave; for others, not doing so, or taking less than they wished, was seen as a point of regret, and this may have been a driver for their later approach to fatherhood. Three fathers outlined requiring more flexibility than typical roles allowed, and taking on reduced hours or flexible contract work to have more control over their flexibility, essentially stepping out of the usual career progression space for a time. For some families, both parents worked reduced hours or used a four-day week to look after children either for a day or care for them outside of school hours. Very few fathers had their child present during their work time; however, for Kurt, necessary flexibility involved having children able to come to the workplace after school; this was one of the only situations in which this was mentioned; however, other fathers mentioned children's presence on virtual meetings or social events when working remotely:

As soon as they started attending, I ended up probably taking a more active role in either getting them to school in the morning or mainly in the last couple of years they've been coming over to my work after school. (Kurt)

Working remotely and some non-standard hours were the most common types of flexibility used, and for many, they were present throughout the different ages of childhood. During the early stages of parenting, this also allowed them to support the recovering parent better; later, it allowed flexibility for transportation and care. Particulars varied between participants; for some this involved completing work in the evenings and weekends; another outlined that this changed week to week based on family work schedules, allowing a more equitable arrangement:

Her and I shared drop offs and pickups quite evenly. We sort of each week we'll sit down and decide who's got meetings when and who can do drop offs and pickups and you know, sometimes like on a Monday I start work early and I usually finish sort of later afternoon just before the traffic kicks off and sometimes later than that and then some days [name redacted] will have like full day workshop delivery that

she does. So, I'll do drop offs and pickups on each day, so that's how we sort of divide that up. (Craig)

All fathers appeared to genuinely feel that they were taking on a significant portion of the parenting of their children. However, it is uncertain to what extent the fathers took on the previously discussed unseen mental or cognitive load of parenting: the planning, research, and mental and emotional responsibility surrounding childcare decisions. Therefore, it cannot be determined how this factored into the impacts of this load on fathers' work. Where there was discussion around the cognitive load of childcare, this still often fell mainly on the mother and was an area that some participants even highlighted that they could improve, acknowledging that the responsibility had fallen primarily on the other parent. Other fathers tended toward the opinion that this was in part due to that being the strength of the other parent or that they were just better at the research and planning side of parenting:

That's probably been something that has led to a bit of an unequal load of things, or it's easy to make the dynamic that you know she's the one that does the work. And then I'm the one that approves the approach, which sometimes hasn't worked out that well. So, if I was doing differently…if I was doing it again, I probably would take a bit more. (Natt)

The importance of involved fatherhood

Participants spoke about their reasoning for being involved in their children's lives and why it was important to them personally. The importance of involved fatherhood generally fell into the sub-themes of the relationship with their child, shared parenting to help with the mother's career, influenced by their own childhood experiences, and necessity due to the need to have dual incomes. Those who prioritised the relationship with the child outlined wanting both parents to be equal, with the child feeling comfortable with time with either parent. Some did acknowledge the impact that parenting has traditionally had on mothers and wanted to ease that by taking on more of the responsibility, requiring the other parent to make fewer sacrifices to their career:

> *We just wanted as a family for it to be equal in terms of the impact that it would have on our career and on our lives. And we wanted to share that. And also, we both wanted to have some dedicated time with him while he was so young. (Brendon)*

Other participants' experiences bonding with their parents impacted their parenting vision. One participant shared the experience of their parents having a lot of responsibility and travel in their career, how this impacted them as a child, and their parents' regrets about this. Both the parent's regret and the experiences of this participant as a child led to them wanting to be more hands-on and available for their children. Another discussed their father being hands-on compared to other fathers at the time meaning they envisioned themselves taking a more active role and building a close relationship with their children from early on in their lives:

> *My parents were always very, very heavily involved in doing church stuff and they've expressed regret to me how much they were involved with the church stuff and less so in the parenting stuff. (Preet)*

Many fathers did not know their own specific motivation behind involved parenting; instead, they outlined that it had just happened or that they had just imagined fatherhood like that. There was also an expectation by some participants that having both parents involved in care meant a split of parenting that allowed both parents an opportunity to have time to themselves as well, building an identity of not just being a parent but maintaining a sense of the person they had been before having children. One parent was concerned with maintaining a solid relationship with their partner, ensuring they were partners first, and sharing the care helped facilitate that:

We've been wary of becoming people whose kids become their lives… Our first, our first priority is to...each other… We'll love the kids to the moon and back, but we were each there before the kids were, and they're gonna leave home at some point and we'll both be there. So, …our marriage is our first priority (Sam)

The reasoning behind fathering centred largely around having a good relationship with children, and even fathers who had other reasons saw these benefits. Other reasons included consideration of career flexibility, earning power, and who was a more career-driven partner. There was an acknowledgment of the impacts on women traditionally; however, few fathers discussed this as reasoning for their parenting style.

Career Impacts

This theme looks at the impact's fatherhood had on the career of these participants and career progression and is divided into the sub-themes of short-term impacts on career progression, social career elements, and career progression after young children.

Several short-term career impacts were identified, particularly revolving around the ability to take on new roles. Many of these, particularly around moving to new roles,

were centred around fears of the expectations and attitudes of managers, the difficulty of relationship-building and how this may negatively impact their parenting. For example, when relationship building with clients or colleagues involves a reduction in flexibility due to the benefits of face-to-face contact or where there are barriers around flexibility due to the need to build trust with a new manager, both of these potentially impact the ability to parent as they wish. Participants identified the importance of flexibility in balancing their careers and fatherhood, and for many, this impacted the roles they would consider. Fathers tried to assess flexibility from the initial stages of job advertisements through to interviewing. This made them more hesitant to take a risk when contemplating a new role, particularly where the manager or environment was thought likely to make fatherhood difficult as per Andrew's comment below:

I do recall like I got a job offer with another company when I was interviewing for this one and I definitely got the vibe that from the manager she doesn't. She seems pretty traditional and pretty conservative, and she just doesn't seem like she'd be a very flexible manager. (Andrew)

The effort and expectation when stepping into a new role also contributed to this reluctance. One participant explained the face-to-face work needed in relationship-building, particularly with external parties and clients. There was the perception that this would impact negatively on family commitments through a reduction in available workplace flexibility:

One of the things that I always think about is, OK, well to change jobs ...I need to; to reintroduce myself to a lot of people and ... they'll be expecting that to be done face to face. (Brad)

Building trust was a significant factor considered when considering the move to a new role, and there was a feeling that parenting and associated flexibility was something employers would need to be ok with immediately. The demand for face-to-face contact and reduction of flexibility was further complicated by externally-facing roles. Regular contact, both externally and within the team was seen as something necessary to develop trust in the new employee's work ethic, and ability,

particularly at a time when many organisations drive a return to a more office-based environment as in Brad's case:

> *Now that covid's gone and all that sort of stuff, you know, which is fair enough…then because they don't really know you, they don't necessarily trust that you, you know, fully to work from home. (Brad)*

Within their organisation, progression opportunities were felt to be impacted. Most fathers felt that their team was supportive but that their remote work or offset hours led to less visibility in the organisation and possible reputational impact. This was generally thought to be due to not being front-of-mind for managers, due to lack of physical presence, rather than a conscious bias around fathers or fatherhood; however, some fathers felt they may be seen as less valuable to the organisation:

> *You become sort of missing in action. Uh, you know, that out of sight, out of mind sort of thing...and that can certainly that can certainly end your potentially your opportunities for promotion and all that ... because you're just not seen as present and not in people's immediate thinking (Brad)*

The social side of work came through as an area that impacted progression. This is crucial for building solid relationships, being seen as present, and being more visible in the organisation. This area was generally seen as negatively impacted by involved fatherhood and flexible work, as participants felt less able to attend or stay at planned events. Due to childcare and related responsibilities, events not scheduled in advance or outside usual work hours were further impacted. For some, there was also the pressure of trying to fit in a normal, or even increased amount of productivity, within a smaller period of time, due to needing to return home for children or related tasks. This made it difficult to attend team activities:

> *Yeah, we even right now we have every Friday social activities, normally between three too late, but I only can stay up to 5pm. Yeah. So, I never stay after five. Because I need to go home and do the housework. (Max)*

Another father explained the positive impacts of fatherhood, that may help progression: You definitely get taken more seriously. It's easier to get pay rises. You seem, like, more mature. It's…easier to connect with people. (Aaron)

Fathers in consulting, contracting or small business owners attended fewer social occasions, often intentionally choosing this for themselves. However, this is unlikely to have impacted progression as few to no progression opportunities were available to them. This did cause other impacts; some felt this lack of attendance at social events meant they were not seen as a strong part of the team. This was not necessarily a bad thing to all fathers, however, with one father outlining that they had no desire to be in a team environment or deal with the negatives that come along with this. Others felt they connected with their teams in other ways and showed their value by being good at their role. There was also a feeling that most team members understood the commitments that came with having a family and the impacts on socialising:

I think they all understand… So, so people without kids, they can stay up to 8 or 9pm? Yeah, but for people with kids then? Fine. Yeah. Latest, so it's understandable. So, everyone knows that. (Max)

Several fathers felt that, though there may be an impact on their careers, this was a consequence of having young children who demanded more time and care, having less energy to work long hours and less drive to focus on their careers and this seemed to be seen as expected and acceptable. However, though there was seen to be an impact on the career short-term, there was a feeling that, once children were older, the career could grow. The consequences of this interruption to career progression were seen as short-term, and multiple fathers outlined the belief that this would not have a long-term impact. The general feeling was that this was an understandable consequence, and due to its short-term nature, not one that participants minded making. This meant a general feeling that it would all work out well in the long run and would not have much if any, sustained impact:

I mean, after the kids are more mature … I can spend the time then for my own career, right. So, my career would take longer to, you know, to grow... But I think in the long run, it works out. (Harold)

One father outlined that the time spent now focusing on children rather than career when their children were young was something that would probably be valued more by their children now, rather than when they were older and wanted less to do with their parents:

I think in some ways, it's probably, definitely impacted my career…, I'm not worried about it. I'm still relatively young, still 20- 25 years to work or something silly like that….We'd rather invest the time in their lives now where they value … and it's valuable for them to spend time with us. Cause when they are 14 or 15, they're probably not gonna wanna hang out with us anyway and we could probably work more then. (Craig)

Another identified that there had been a significant short-term impact on his career due to wanting to work closer to home in a role that allowed a more active role in childcare. This meant leaving a role with less flexibility, requiring travel and extended periods in different cities. However, in this situation, career progression was possible again relatively quickly and the participant was in a senior leadership role at the time of the interview.

I did take a significant step back in my career ... and it meant about a drop in nearly a 50% drop in my salary. (Kurt)

Overall, there was a feeling that any impacts on the career were short-term and more of a dela to career progression, with fathers not experiencing long-term negative career impacts. Parenting responsibilities were expected to decrease substantially as children age, which would help ease these impacts. Most of the participants were still early in their journeys of balancing career and parenting; however, those who had older children and had experienced impacts of requiring flexibility were in relatively senior professional or management roles in white-collar organisations. This was true even where there had been significant drops in salary or changes in the direction of the career. However, this was not generalisable due to the small number of fathers who had older children in this research.

Minimising impacts on the career

This theme looks at the support fathers identified that assisted them in their ability to take on a more active role in the care of their children without, or with minimised, negative career impacts. These are both within the personal and professional sphere and are divided into the sub-themes of managerial and team support, and having parents within the workplace.

Managerial and team support was a significant contributor to balancing work and family. Key areas such as understanding of the importance of parenthood, and pro-family behaviours modelled by managers helped normalise flexibility and created a supportive environment, enabling fathers to cater to family needs. Participants contrasted this to less supportive experiences in other workplaces or teams, as well of those in experienced pre-covid before relative normalisation of flexibility. In this environment work was largely office-based, and judgement and criticism for fathers who required flexibility was more common. They may also have been simply unable to access the necessary flexibility, and consequently experienced negative impacts on their work/life balance:

> *I had a horrible manager in a previous role … When I talked about flexibility, when we had him, her suggestion was that I, you know, dropped my hours. OK. Well, why don't you work part time then? I was like, no, no, that's not flexibility….my current manager now is ….a young dad and he gets it and...So it's yeah, a really good culture at [organisation name] which makes it makes it easier because it's and what I've learned from previous employers like it's not the same. (Andrew)*

This was not the only experience with inflexible managers who tried to remove the now-expected allowances for flexibility when Covid-19 restrictions ended. Another father outlined that the organisation tried to remove flexible working and ask employees to return to work from the office permanently; however, when a whole team pushed back, a compromise was reached to have 2 days' work from home, on a planned schedule. While not true flexibility, this allowed the father to remain more involved in childcare than a full return to the office. While fathers did identify some

downsides of having a flexible work culture, they also outlined the significant benefits to their lives and were more likely to remain with flexible organisations.

Team support was also vital, with participants discussing how an understanding team who did not seem to cast judgment significantly contributed to the ease of work/life balance. This meant less expectation to socialise after work or be available when working flexibly. Most experiences were positive in current workplaces, however, there were experiences of unsupportive team members and examples of lack of support for fathers due to them not being seen as the main caregiver. This was both through interactions such as team members and managers not understanding why they were taking on so much of the load or why the mother was not the more involved parent, but also around managers not being able to provide fathers with the same leave and flexibility for parenting due to restrictive policies. For some, there were questions about why they were doing the care work and not the mothers; this was felt to be especially frustrating as this was not questioned for mothers:

So, one of the partners in the business, one of the owners, he was just talking about like oh you know because you know, see the kids in here after school and you know, I know you leave a couple days early a couple of days and you know between that and work and stuff like that it's like, do you ever feel like it's too much? (Kurt)

For some organisations, this resistance to the change of gender and care norms was present in the company-wide culture, meaning that there were significant difficulties for fathers wanting to take a more hands-on role, and this was frequently reinforced structurally. This meant things like gendered policies were present, granting rights to mothers specifically, due to the lack of understanding that a father would want to, or could, take on a primary care role for children. For others, it was less formal and mostly revolved around a lack of knowledge or consideration:

I still think... that is part of the conversation as well because...even though I definitely was the primary caregiver for my son, when I started with the organisation, they didn't consider me the primary caregiver for childcare reimbursement because... I hadn't given birth to him. (Kurt)

In addition to general team support, having other parents visible within their organisations helped with a feeling of understanding. This was partly due to a more personal knowledge of the challenges and complexities of balancing paid employment with being a parent, leading to an increased understanding of the challenges faced by working parents and the importance of the parenting role. This generally leads to a feeling of being able to prioritise the role of parenting more while minimising the previously discussed negative impacts of involved parenting. This was not always true, however, with multiple examples raised of other fathers within teams with more traditional approaches to parenting taking on a breadwinner role, with lower involvement in the hands-on care and a focus on paid employment. The presence of this type of father in many of the outlined situations led to the reemergence of some of these negative impacts. For one father who brought his children into the workplace, the contrast between having a welcoming team and one in which there was no understanding or empathy, there was a significant difference in feeling and work/life balance:

I started early, so the kids would come in before... the office opened. They would hang out with me for 30 minutes or so and then I would take them over to school. But my boss at the time became...frustrated or he alleged that there were complaints, but he was just saying ...that wasn't gonna work so then I would need to reconfigure my hours so that if I did have the kids in the morning, it would mean me starting late and maybe working later to accommodate that. (Kurt)

Post-pandemic expectations

This theme discusses the impacts of COVID-19 on flexible work and involved parenting and how this has impacted an easier balance of flexible work and parenting, both short—and long-term. Fathers discussed their experiences around changes in workplace expectations and how performance was monitored after the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants largely viewed this as making balancing work and childcare responsibilities easier because being a good worker was no longer tied to presenteeism. Due to the initial order to work from home and the ongoing disruption to office life, flexible working became more of a norm for participants. All fathers were in professional roles that could be performed remotely:

I think if anything, it made it easier. Definitely the time and then also attitudes after it, it just became, like ….seems like less of an unreasonable expectation to have, I think it just became a bit more of a norm. (Brendon)

While the general feeling was that the COVID-19 pandemic had positively impacted the ability to juggle family and work and had made workplaces more accepting of their flexible approach, for one father, this was even more important and allowed them to take on the care of their children without having to go through the official channels to organise flexibility as they became a sole parent. The experience and familiarity of flexible working during COVID gave their managers the evidence that they had successfully managed the two roles when the time came to return to the office, allowing more ability to negotiate:

Well...COVID was the catalyst because … I certainly hadn't seen it in my time. Most people had talked about working from home and all this sort of stuff. No company that I was aware of was, and there might be two or three or whatever there might be some, but certainly none that I'd worked for or aware of that had actually said yes, you can do that (Brad)

However, this positive impact from the pandemic was only valid for some. For one father, the pandemic was detrimental to balancing work with family, complicated,

and exacerbated by a senior role with significant responsibilities, sometimes requiring prolonged absences from the family home. This situation led to issues around burnout and resulted in the participant changing careers and taking on part-time work in a different environment, allowing for more flexibility. This meant the ability to spend more time reconnecting with children, as well as being a practical decision for mental health:

I had quite a bit of responsibility and juggling the pandemic and working at home and my wife wanting to do equal amounts of work and juggling kids became quite a bit of a recipe for a huge amount of stress and burnout. (Craig)

There was also a feeling that the pandemic's impact on flexibility was slowly being withdrawn from many organisations, with pressure for employees to return to less flexible ways of working. This included reduced work from home, mandatory days in the office, and less flexibility with work hours. This impairs the ability to balance both roles, which means that working to suit family requirements is more challenging.

What needs to change?

Participants discussed what they believed would be helpful actions, both from organisations and society, to help fathers balance work and family in a way that meant reduced impact on careers and more fathers taking on hands-on parenting. The hope is that this would lead to more equitable parenting in the long term.

As discussed above, for some fathers, the primary support they felt helped was flexibility and trust from their employer. This was reinforced by participants who spoke to organisations needing to allow more self-management and autonomy in terms of having the ability to be reactive with their time and able to utilise flexibility, often with little notice:

I think the flexibility and understanding of things changing quickly so and that's what I have for the month which is really great. So, for example, my wife just got unwell

with some kind of like flu gastric bug thing last week, and I needed to take some time off to look after her. And also, then just be around at home to some do childcare, things like that (Brendon)

Other fathers felt that for around the first year of a child's life, the mother was the more important parent and outlined the feeling that fathers could be supported by their organisations later in the child's life, such as when the other parent returned to work. For one parent, the reasoning was around the importance of breastfeeding in a child's early life, while for the other, they outlined a feeling of it being natural that the mother was the more important parent in the early days:

I actually kind of agree that it's better to help mothers more. ….I know that there's all this stuff about, like socially constructed gender roles and stuff…. But I do think that there's like a biological element to their like gender roles and those early years like breastfeeding is like... you know, the child's health and all that kind of thing, I kind of. (Jeff)

Despite feeling that the mother was the primary caregiver in the early days of a child's life, supporting fathers was still important, as it allowed them to support the mother who was taking on most of the care whilst learning how to be a parent and recovering from birth. Employers providing flexibility thought the key to helping fathers offer this support, including support such as both parents being able to take leave for a more extended period, flexibility in terms of hours worked, and the ability to work from home. This meant fathers could better contribute to caring for the child and the mother and giving the mother a break as needed.

Participants suggested that structural issues contributed to fathers being less likely to work flexibly, take extended parental leave, or be the primary caregiver. For example, some of the fathers acknowledged the differences in salary made to those who took on those roles and thought that a reduction in the gender pay gap and pay equity gap was one way of decreasing this barrier. This would mean that men would not as often be the more highly paid parent and that there was less need for women to be the default parent if one was to stay at home. Other structural changes mentioned were increasing the number of women in senior and leadership roles.

This would allow more fathers to be involved in their children's care and primary caregivers when desired and increase women's value economically and in their organisation. It was suggested that this may be a significant factor in why traditional gender roles still dominate, with women performing more of the household tasks:

Well, the gender pay gap is the first one, you know, like I think you know historically that's why women stayed at home with the child because it was just more cost-effective and the cost-effective because, you know, women didn't get paid as much It's, you know, yesterday it's, you know, the gender pay gap is a lot smaller, but there it's still a thing, you know. (Andrew)

On a broader societal level, fewer factors were identified regarding what could cause positive change, and fathers seemed unsure about how broader change could be made. There was discussion around salary and wage-earning in relation to living costs and how this has impacted parenting, with dual-income families now being the norm and even a necessity for many families. This meant that both parents often worked a full-time week to be comfortable, which meant much more juggling to look after children. A better match of wage and living costs so that both parents could work part-time, or if preferred in those individual family circumstances, one parent could work full-time, was discussed as a solution to this outlined by one parent:

My impression is back in the day when … It was just expected that the man would be working full time and the woman would be at home...like I don't wouldn't necessarily advocate going back to that model, but it would be back to, I would advocate, yeah, going back into a situation where just one parent working full time and by that I mean like 40 hours would be enough, and so maybe you split that between you both like 20 hours, but yeah, basically it comes down to… how much to get paid for the amount of time you put into your job, yeah. (Jeff)

Some participants chose to openly role model involved fatherhood and flexible work to encourage others to be more involved in raising their children. These fathers outlined that they spoke about the importance of their family, brought their kids into their workplaces or on video calls, and encouraged those in their organisations to balance work with their family lives as a way of doing this. Participants not in senior roles also highly desired this as something they would like to see in their manager's model. Government and legislative intervention were also discussed. However, the

majority of those who mentioned this did not have a firm idea about how this might be done; they only felt that this needed to come through a top-down method and that businesses and society would then follow.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the thematic analysis results of twelve interviews with fathers involved in Aotearoa. This research identified why fathers were active within childcare; these largely revolved around practicality or the impacts on the family unit. It then discussed the impacts that participants identified on their careers. These were primarily short-term impacts on career mobility external to their existing organisations and career progression. Organisational supports were discussed with a focus on the areas that supported and enabled involved fatherhood, in particular supportive management and teams, trust and flexibility and supportive policies, before moving on to those that contributed to negative career experiences such as unsupportive teams and a strong culture of traditional gender norms. The participants also suggested more comprehensive changes to enable more support for fathers and equity in both parenting and career.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research aimed to understand better the experiences of employed, highly involved fathers who utilise flexible work to do so. Highly involved fathers care for their children's daily physical, mental and emotional needs (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). This chapter explores the findings discussed in the previous chapter. It then looks at understanding what may have impacted these experiences and placing some context around them, mainly focusing on any findings that are new or different from the existing body of literature. These findings centred around the emotional and physical sides of involved fatherhood, the impacts on career progression, and the situational factors that may have contributed to these experiences. This research revealed that fathers did not expect to experience the same career disadvantages long-term as mothers typically do. Instead, they view any impact as an acceptable delay rather than a permanent interruption or implications. This lack of long-term impact was particularly evident when there were intense experiences of acceptance and support from organisations. In contrast, mothers have experienced long-term and ongoing wage and salary impacts (Kahn et al., 2014). This indicates that there may be more to the effects on mothers than simply a reduction in productivity at work due to investment in their children. This potentially is impacted by types of care, types of work, or societal beliefs around ideal workers and men's alignment with this.

Progression for involved fathers

This research sought to identify and understand fathers' experiences in balancing paid employment with involved fatherhood and if this impacted their career progression. Career progression was identified as being impacted by involved fatherhood in the short-term. Overall, fathers generally felt they did not, or would not experience substantial, long-term negative impacts on their careers; rather, fatherhood was understood more as a delay to career progression. This was primarily thought to be due to the disruption of younger children on sleep, and therefore focus, as well as the reduced ability to work longer hours. Any anticipated,

or actual disruption was due to fathers needing to provide more care and time dedicated to children in the early stages of their lives, including during night time hours. These short-term impacts lead to uncertainty and even fear when fathers consider taking on new roles due to anticipating expectations placed upon them by new organisations, teams or managers, as well as a feeling of less visibility within existing organisations, potentially impacting remuneration and promotion. In the short term, these experiences are similar to those of mothers, with slower progression and the inability to take on specific roles being prominent in the research around how motherhood impacts the career (McIntosh et al., 2012). However, these impacts have typically been seen to a greater extent in women's careers than this group of fathers has experienced (McIntosh et al., 2012). Short-term negative impacts were anticipated to cease or reduce for fathers when children's needs decreased, and this meant fathers returned to full-time work or could devote more time and energy to career progression. In contrast, for mothers, these consequences are more likely to continue to impact the career long-term and even be permanent, impacting through to the end of the career, with women still experiencing glass ceilings and significant gender pay and pay equity issues, particularly where they have multiple children (Kahn et al., 2014; McIntosh et al., 2012). Inequality appears to be decreasing across many measurements, however, there are still significant adverse impacts from motherhood on women's careers (Filipová, et al., 2024) with these negative impacts appearing to exceed those experienced by the fathers in this research. This finding possibly indicates that men, even when they are participating in more hands-on parenting, are still seen as closer to the desired or ideal worker than women and that many of the impacts on women's careers may be more strongly tied to gender and discrimination, than the actual impacts of them balancing a family with paid work on productivity.

Though there are some negative impacts on the career of fathers, it appears likely that there is still some positive gender bias toward men as employees even when they do not meet the ideal worker norm in its entirety. Those who identify as fathers in the workplace have reported benefits such as being seen as more serious, mature, and practical, commanding a higher salary and being considered more highly for promotion (Hodges & Budig, 2010). This aligns with some of the previous research on the daddy bonus and how this impacts men's reputation and pay in the

workplace and their ability to connect with others (Ladge et al., 2015; Hodges & Budig, 2010). This supports the idea that those not meeting the ideal worker norm may, in some situations, still experience less impact from their involved fatherhood due to their identity as men within the workplace. This is likely to be even more pronounced within white-collar and professional roles (Hodges & Budig, 2010; Miller, 2014) and aligns with the sample of this group, who were largely office-based, white-collar roles. Indeed, participants identified their occupations, particularly the white-collar and office-based nature of most of them, as contributing to the success of their arrangements compared to those in their organisations who worked in service-based roles.

These positive stereotypes are that fathers in the workplace are more serious, mature and productive. Research outcomes are mixed; some show that fathers work more productively and earn more than non-fathers, yet other research suggests that those more involved in fatherhood are likely to be less productive or decrease their working hours (McGill, 2014). In contrast, narratives centred around mothers tend to be more discriminatory or harmful when discussing their work, with some research suggesting that mothers may be expected to meet higher work standards than non-mothers (Fuegen et al., 2004). It is unknown whether there is a difference in how highly involved mothers and fathers perform their work after having children, and this was not explicitly addressed with the fathers in this research. Some research does support the idea that fathers work harder and more effectively after having children (Hodges & Budig, 2010), and there was significant discussion from participants where they described working within evenings and weekends due to a need to meet deliverables and expectations of work with certain types of flexibility seeming to contribute to this. This was particularly prevalent in types of work that were more focused on deliverables and outcomes rather than time present in an office environment. Therefore, this suggests that the cohort of fathers in this thesis do continue to focus on productivity and work outcomes as well as being involved fathers.

There are differing societal expectations and stereotypes regarding fathers as opposed to mothers (Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005; Bataille & Hyland, 2023), which may contribute to fathers' experiences in this research. As discussed, men

are seen as fitting within the ideal worker norm, which sees them as more dedicated to their paid employment than women and less encumbered by family responsibilities (Coron & Garbe, 2023). When men are involved in looking after their children, they may be held to lower performance standards due to their status as fathers (Fuegen et al., 2004). Women, on the other hand, may be disadvantaged by being parents, with negative stereotypes (Gao & Tian, 2023) and higher expectations for productivity than for non-mothers (Fuegen et al., 2004).

Flexible work practices and their impacts

Working flexibly and not having the pressure to align with standard working hours or locations is consistently seen as necessary by parents. This type of workplace flexibility can help to ease work-life conflict by allowing parents to manage their family commitments with their work (Sajjad et al., 2024), potentially leading to reduced impact on their careers. Some research has shown that managerial and professional roles involve longer hours without a decrease in parenting, and this may be due to this flexibility or the prioritisation of parenting over recreational and leisure activities (McGill, 2014). This type of flexibility does come with its issues and potentially contributes to difficulty drawing boundaries between work and family time, with some parents feeling like they owe their organisations more due to the provision of flexibility (Grönlund & Öun, 2022; Sajjad et al., 2024). This potential lack of boundaries was supported in this research, with several participants discussing working in the evenings to facilitate their parental involvement, enabling them to perform school pickups or drop-offs, or working from home while looking after sick children. This type of work, with less firm boundaries, where parents use flexible work practices but have intense organisational demands to meet deliverables or a specific time present on work, can lead to issues around high work-life conflict (Grönlund & Öun, 2022). However, though there are potential downsides to this type of flexible work, this remained something that participants saw as highly beneficial, and even essential, to their ability to parent in a hands-on way.

Another type of workplace flexibility that came up repeatedly was parental leave, and several participants in this research took leave beyond the mandated allowance of two weeks. These were sometimes at the birth of their children or sometimes a way of supporting the birthing parent to return to work and take over primary care of their children for some time. Taking parental leave as a father is significantly less common than for mothers and there has been some research suggesting that this is a predictor of the level of paternal involvement in child raising, as well as important for learning parenting skills (Rege & Solli, 2010; Bataille, & Hyland, 2023). Noting some of the research around this potentially impacting future involvement, enabling fathers to take more extended periods of parental leave, whether simultaneously, or in succession with mothers, may help to influence the future levels of involvement in fatherhood. This is, however, still a divisive point, and the research is not all aligned in an understanding of the extent to which leave influences involvement (Bataille & Hyland, 2023; Rege & Solli, 2010; Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2007). The percentage of participants who took parental leave of any length in this research was high when compared to the average for fathers in Aotearoa more generally; however, it did not necessarily indicate a difference in the self-perception of levels of involvement for the participants, and, as this was entirely based on self-report, it is unclear whether this was true for this group.

Parental leave amongst fathers is frequently much shorter than in the birthing parent's case and therefore presents little interruption in terms of career progression and visibility within the workplace. Some research suggests that, over the five years following paternity leave, fathers may experience negative impacts on their earnings through paid employment (Rege & Solli, 2013). In contrast, for mothers, negative impacts can extend throughout their career in its entirety, particularly for those with multiple children. Though more research would be needed to understand the impacts of parental leave for fathers in an Aotearoa context and their causes, shortened periods of parental leave may be a contributing factor in the decreased period of impact. Part-time work is also less common among fathers. This may be due to barriers such as financial need for full-time work, as men are still often the higher earners in a family, or the perception of obstacles meaning that they do not feel this is an option (McGill, 2014). A small number of fathers in this study altered their hours on an ongoing basis, working a part-time week, and most of those who

did, did not think this would substantially impact their progression long-term but acknowledged that this did limit their options in the short term. Those who worked part-time in this research did so within highly skilled, or white-collar occupations. These included areas such as research, engineering and project management. The research on the impacts of part-time work on parents speaks to how mothers often work in the regions that are highly gendered or less attractive, perhaps assuming these to be more family-friendly (Budig & England, 2001; McIntosh, et al., 2012). These roles, as well as part-time employment more generally, are less likely to have positive labour outcomes and may lead to an increase in the amount of childcare and unpaid domestic labour that women are responsible for (Grönlund & Öun, 2022). It is less clear what the impacts of part-time hours are on fathers, however, some research suggests this is minimal when compared to mothers (McIntosh, et al., 2012).

Flexibility for these participants was gained in different ways, with some having more formal policies and processes around this, some as easy as a conversation, and others, who did not feel this was as acceptable in their organisations, gaining their flexibility through ‘stealth parenting’. Stealth parenting includes parenting during work hours without notifying their organisations or not arranging flexibility with superiors to balance the two parts of the parent's life. Stealth parenting is more likely when there is a lack of family-friendly policies, or in particular, where there is reinforcement of gender norms through supervisors and management (Ladge et al., 2015). Gender stereotypes around who should be caring for families and the impact this will have on paid employment can be pervasive even in organisations with good, equitable, family-friendly policies (Balan et al., 2023). In many of these organisations, these policies may be more in place for show rather than a genuine commitment to being a family-friendly organisation or acceptance of changing gender norms (Balan et al., 2023). These ideals still hold firm with many seeing fathers in the breadwinner space of parenting, and expecting this to be the leading role for fathers (Bataille, & Hyland, 2023). These organisational norms may lead to fathers not taking up the allowances in these policies, even when they are available to them, due to not feeling represented in these policies (Balan et al., 2023). Examples of this came up for some participants in this research, with several fathers mentioning male managers or colleagues within their organisation who held

on to gendered norms of caring and lacked understanding of why participants wanted to be involved in their children's day-to-day care. The reverse was also present in some organisations; however, participants identified some managers who took more of a family-first approach, displaying understanding and empathy toward juggling family and work commitments. This proactive and supportive approach is necessary to help fathers feel more entitled to these family-friendly polices (Balan et al., 2023).

Post- pandemic expectations and impacts on work-life balance

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the employment landscape, how people worked, and their ongoing expectations for career flexibility (Maani, 2021; Ng et al., 2021). This area significantly impacted participants and was explicitly discussed as a reason for their ability to work in a way that benefited their families. There were substantial responses in many countries, including New Zealand, which impacted how families balanced their work and family lives. The ability to work from home during the pandemic and resulting lockdowns meant that parents were able to spend more time engaged with their family life, and during this time, many fathers increased their contributions to family and household responsibilities (Leap et al., 2023) and this continued after the end of pandemic measures. Working remotely and having the flexibility to work non-standard hours, in particular, were important results of the pandemic and contributed toward participants' feelings of involvement as they could take part in the care of their children and those with young children during the pandemic.

It was also highlighted that several participants felt that they could better support the primary carer, generally the mother, during and after this period. Research suggests that fathers significantly increased their childcare responsibilities during this period, aligning with participants' experiences (Craig & Churchill, 2021). However, the literature on the impacts of COVID-19 measures and the associated change in the balance of care on both families and fathers is mixed, with many parents feeling that they experienced lowered satisfaction with work/life balance and, for some,

increased strain during this period (Craig & Churchill, 2021). This may come down to some of the support structures discussed by participants as contributing to the success of their work/life balance, which included having supportive managers and teams and recognition of their role as a parent. When managers and supervisors display family-supportive behaviours, this may contribute to satisfaction with work/life balance (Mathis et al., 2023). Participant experiences supported this, outlining the benefits of having supportive managers and how this impacted their ability to balance family commitments while contrasting these with situations in which they lacked support or were faced with a lack of flexibility. However, these were not directly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic and the new ways of working it brought were noted as helpful in changing the work landscape for participants and bringing a new acceptance of flexible working and involvement with family life. This has lasted long after the pandemic measures have ended and continues to benefit fathers, allowing flexibility with less judgement and helping develop this as a norm. Most of the participants started their involved parenting years ago or since the pandemic, and it is possible that this has strongly contributed to their ability to do this and potentially decreased some of the negative impacts of involved parenting.

Types of Involved parenting and the impacts on the career

Fatherhood is a changing role, and while a substantial number of fathers are still taking on the more traditional fatherhood approach, many are now seeking to be more involved, dividing or leading the care of their children (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). This division of care differs in each family, often considering individual desires, cultural norms, family commitments, and career and societal expectations (Diniz et al.,2021; McGill, 2014). However, how participants viewed and performed involved parenting was largely aligned in this research group, and descriptions revolved around hands-on care work and transportation of children. Some fathers outlined other domestic tasks, such as cooking and cleaning as being what they considered part of their involvement in parenting responsibilities. However, only around a third of the participants identified more intangible tasks such as research,

planning, decision-making and other functions that fell under the parenting role. This is not unusual, and the unseen mental load has been recognised as falling on mothers disproportionately, with the mother taking on the brunt of the thinking, planning, and emotional labour in the family environment (Dean et al., 2022; Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023). Ideals around the good mother means a situation in which mothers may take on this cognitive and emotional load by default (Dean et al., 2022) and even those among the participants who raised this as an element of parenting acknowledged taking a backseat in this area, often outlining the other parent being better at this area of parenting.

The disparity in dividing the cognitive load of parenting may also contribute to the differences in career impact. As outlined previously, fathers tended to describe their involvement more around physical cares that take place while with their children and less so on the intangible responsibilities; this, therefore, could leave men able to focus more on productivity while they are away from children in their workplace. This mental load has been identified as being particularly draining to productivity and health, and this can impact paid and domestic work significantly due to the division of attention and focus (Dean et al., 2022). This is consistently shown in two-parent homes as being a gendered form of work that is unequally shared within the domestic space but can exist even within separated families, particularly for those in heterosexual relationships co-parenting with a parent of the opposite gender (Dean et al., 2022; Luthra & Haux, 2022). This division has been framed as being due to the mother being naturally better at organisational tasks and family management (Luthra & Haux, 2022), and this was consistent with comments from some participants in this research. This disproportionate load leaves mothers with an ongoing cognitive load with outcomes such as poorer physical health and higher stress common when compared to the average father. Many mothers continue to perform this task when not with children while trying to perform paid work, potentially increasing work/life conflict (Dean et al., 2022; Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023).

Support for fathers

One key area to the feeling of success for fathers in balancing their work and family and decreasing negative impacts on their careers is the experience of support from the organisation and their team. This was particularly strong when the support was from their team or manager, and lacking this support compromised the positive benefits of structural family-friendly practices. This was in part due to outdated gender norms in some of the policies and organisations, where, due to this, fathers relied on the understanding of managers to gain the support they needed. Research has suggested a growing legitimacy around involved fatherhood; however, workplace supports still need to meet those needs and remain heavily gendered and skewed toward support of the birthing parent (Banister & Kerrane, 2024). Other research indicates that even where there are policies, lack of support from the team, or strong societal expectations may prevent some fathers from taking leave or being highly involved, fearing repercussions, and this is particularly true in areas where there is more of a culture around hegemonic masculinity (Ladge et al., 2015; Byun & Won, 2020; Kaplan & Offer, 2020). In this research, policies at times also seemed to lead to less flexibility, with examples such as structured days in the office or pre-selected days to work from home seen by organisations as workplace flexibility. However, the true flexibility that parents found most compelling was balancing work with unexpected events such as child illness, attending children's events during work hours, and then making these up later in the day or week.

Conclusions

Socially, most fathers did not report significant impacts, with many sitting in social groups where fathers were similarly hands-on with their families. This enabled a safer feeling for these participants in their social groups, in contrast to those who reported being outliers in their circle of friends, who experienced a lack of understanding of their commitments related to parenting and their reasoning for why they would undertake the responsibilities of fatherhood. Research has previously suggested that men are concerned that they may experience discrimination at an

even greater level than women (Byun & Won, 2020). This does not seem to be true in this group of participants, who felt that they did not receive significant discrimination for their hands-on fathering in the long term. Before taking on the role, they did not outline this as a considerable concern. The decision to be more hands-on and sacrifice their working life was generally more around the benefits to children, themselves, and their co-parents, not weighing up career priorities. These differed significantly from those of women discussed in the earlier literature review. Fathers in this research tended to believe that if any negative impacts were experienced, this was a temporary impact due to reduced focus on their jobs. This was considered particularly true when children were young rather than a long-term ongoing issue, as their needs would decrease over time. There is, however, the possibility that participant expectations around the impacts in the longer term may not be accurate, with many still in the earlier years of their parenting, and so making assumptions based on their past experiences and their view of what other fathers had been able to achieve. However, positive impacts discussed by some fathers, such as being seen as more severe or mature, did not necessarily have a noticeable end date, though again, this was primarily seen through observation of other fathers and so not necessarily captured over a significant period.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research aimed to understand the experiences of fathers who were highly involved in raising their children and required flexible work practices to facilitate this. Highly involved meant those who were highly engaged in the active day-to-day care of their children's emotional, physical and mental needs (Bataille & Hyland, 2023). This research came from a feminist perspective, seeking to understand the fuller social picture of fathers' experience and what factors have impacted this, as well as to contribute knowledge in this area to promote and improve equality in parenting and equitable career outcomes for women. The main aim was to understand better the career experiences of these involved fathers and how this impacts areas such as ongoing career progression, the social elements of the workplace, and other relevant areas such as access to training and any impact when searching for new roles. This understanding also helped identify how these compared to the effects for mothers established in previous research. By examining these differences, it is hoped that more targeted support can be made available for fathers, increasing involvement and providing more equity in parenting. A more balanced distribution of parenting responsibilities will likely promote greater equality in career opportunities, enabling women to build stronger careers in Aotearoa (Westpac, 2021).

Understanding fatherhood's experiences meant speaking to fathers through semi-structured interviews to understand their stories better. Creating these in a semi-structured way meant that fathers had a guide as to what the content covered was, whilst still allowing them to explore what they felt was particularly important to understand their experiences, allowing more freedom to capture different or outlying experiences. Twelve New Zealand-based fathers spoke about their involvement in raising and caring for their children and how they used flexible work practices to enable this. They discussed the impacts on their careers and support within their workplaces, how this had impacted them, and touched on their expectations for their careers going forward. This helped me understand the career impacts for involved fathers and that, in the short term, these experiences appeared to be similar to mothers', with some differences in the severity of these impacts. However,

this appeared to decrease in the long term, and fathers felt confident there would be no negative impacts on their careers due to their involved parenting.

Key findings

This research found several themes in the stories of fathers and what fatherhood meant for them, both within the household and their work. Key areas found through this research were that fathers experienced several significant impacts on their careers that aligned with mothers' experiences in the short term. These included feeling less visibility, less ability to move between roles and organisations, and less ability to grow their careers due to decreased focus and time. A key difference, however, was the longevity of these impacts. This difference was displayed in the finding that fathers currently still in the involved fatherhood stage, actively using flexibility to enable this, did not foresee long-term repercussions on their careers. This was true even where there were significant short-term impacts, which was supported by participants whose children were older and were employed in more senior roles within their organisations. In comparison, research shows that for women, the career and related areas such as wage and financial stability are impacted more permanently (Kahn et al., 2014; Austen & Mavisakalyan, 2018). There are several reasons that this may be different for men and women, one of which is that, within fatherhood itself, this research uncovered that fathers broadly framed their involvement around the physical care and transportation of children, whereas, in contrast, mothers also tend to take on much of the more intangible work, known as the mental load of parenting including planning, logistics and research (Dean et al., 2022; Rodriguez Castro et al., 2022). This may contribute to significant differences in mental and physical health, productivity and focus at work (Reich-Stiebert, et al., 2023). Another aspect to consider is that this research indicates that men see involved fatherhood as slowing their career rather than impeding it, and they are happy to prioritise childcare in the short term as, overall, throughout the life of their careers, it will make little difference to their overall success.

Another key finding of this research was the types of support that significantly impacted fathers and their feelings of success in balancing work and personal life. Several areas appeared to affect the extent to which these short-term negative impacts were felt. These included the acceptance of fatherhood within the workplace, particularly by managers, but also amongst teams; supportive policies such as those around parental leave or flexible work; and the types and extent of flexibility available to them. These were not equal in impact and may interact in different ways. For example, lack of social support has been shown to reduce the likelihood of fathers accessing and using family-friendly policies, and conversely, a lot of peer support can also encourage this (Bowles et al., 2022). These findings aligned with participants' views in this research; however, findings here went further and found that manager support was strongly related to how organisations were viewed and the extent to which impacts of involved fatherhood were felt on the career.

Differences in the way in which parenting affects the careers of parents may be due to differences in the stereotypes of parents. Previous research suggests that when women become mothers, they are likely to be perceived to focus more on their family than their career and may be held to higher productivity expectations than they were even before becoming parents (Fuegen et al., 2004). This may make it difficult for women to meet these work standards, impacting the way they are viewed and the view of their performance as employees. In contrast, men are more likely to be seen to meet the ideal worker norm, even when they are fathers, as they are seen as closer to the highly motivated, highly available norm that is based around a male employee. These gendered stereotypes can mean men are seen as, or possibly are, more productive, more serious, and more career-focused once they become fathers (Hodges & Budig, 2010; Mari, 2019). There may also be a contribution in the type of care that parents take on, with women being shown to take on more of the cognitive load of parenting, which they may continue to perform while they are in their place of work (Dean et al., 2022; Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023).

Recommendations for practice

There were several areas highlighted by this research that are considered to support involved fatherhood strongly. The following recommendations could support fathers in both their experience of work/life balance and their practical ability to access and maintain the flexibility needed to achieve this. Fathers who take a more hands-on role with their children are typically going against societal norms, and research has suggested this may impact how they are treated and judged (Gaunt, 2013). For this reason, areas of improvement suggested here primarily revolve around the normalisation and support of involved fathers in the workplace: 1) Supportive managers who understand the needs of parents (Bataille & Hyland, 2023).; 2) The freedom to access and use flexibility without fear of negative repercussions or judgment (Ko & Hwang, 2021; Bataille & Hyland, 2023), 3) Policies that helped support both parents (Bataille & Hyland, 2023; Yadav & Sharma, 2023); and 4) Facilitate connections with other parents (Bowles et al., 2022). The following provides some suggestions for how to enact these recommendations.

1) Supportive managers who understand the needs of parents are essential (Bataille & Hyland, 2023).
    - Achieved through having parents in managerial roles or having compulsory manager training and a strong organisational culture of support.
        - Train managers on supporting parents and flexible work
        - Ensure policies are free of gender norms and bias
    - Actively develop parents who have worked flexibly into managerial pathways.
    - Managers role model organisational support for parents and flexible work such as ‘ leaving loudly’ and making themselves visible to others.

2) Accessible flexibility without fear of negative career repercussions: This needs to be supported by understanding supervisors and supportive organisation (Bataille & Hyland, 2023) and has been shown to significantly reduce work/family conflict (Ko & Hwang, 2021).
    - Have career pathways or roles that openly advertise as including flexible work arrangements.
    - Self-managing teams that focus on outputs and organise around the teams' work and home needs.
    - Mixed modality meetings to help visibility of those working flexibly.
    - Reward senior managers and employees who 'walk the talk'.

3) Policies that support both parents: Flexible working, parental leave and other parent-friendly policies may significantly affect how parents feel supported in the workplace (Yadav & Sharma, 2023; Sajjad et al., 2024).
    - Clear policies on career progression and paths to promote parents in management roles
    - Strong parental leave policies that go above the legal minimums, even if this is more around support and return-to-work coaching,
    - Help part-time workers perform meaningful work in roles that can still help them progress in their careers.

4) Facilitate connections with other parents: this has been shown as vital to engaging fathers as lack of social support may inhibit them from utilising family-friendly policies and being as involved in fatherhood (Bowles et al., 2022).
    - This could be completed through employee resource groups or less formally to provide a feeling of support and community.
    - Provide support to parents, such as coaching and mentoring for parents.

Future Research and Limitations

The research highlighted the implications of involved fatherhood on career, both in the short and long term. Overall, participants perceived these to be minimal in the

longer term and relatively easily overcome once children reached an age where they were more independent, sleeping better, and less inclined toward time spent with parents. However, all the fathers in this research had children in their early teens or younger, with the majority of participants being in the first 10 years of fatherhood. Therefore, future research could focus on the reality for these fathers when their children are older and how this may have aligned, or deviated, from their career expectations and develop an understanding of why any change was present in the longer term, such as fifteen or more years of active fatherhood.. The participants in this study were all in white collar or professional roles. Future research could explore the career impacts of active fatherhood on fathers in occupations and industries that are more service-based or less able to be completed flexibly.

This research is a clear starting point for understanding the experiences of involved fathers and how their careers are impacted by their requirement for flexible working. More research will need to follow this to compare these findings to those of the broader population, with a particular focus on fathers in trades and service-oriented roles being of significant interest due to the lack of research in this area. Several fathers also raised this in this study as an area they considered crucial for future research due to seeing the difference between their experience, generally being office or remotely-based, in professional or other white-collar roles, contrasted with those of more service-or labour-based employees in their organisations.

Conclusion

Fathers in this study reflected an increasing societal change in Aotearoa of men wishing to have a more active role in parenting than previous generations. Through interviewing 12 fathers who are actively involved in parenting and use flexible work arrangements, this research revealed that there is a potential negative impact in the short term on fathers' careers, in a similar way to that which research has shown for women. These were impacts such as invisibility, perhaps caused by the use of flexible work arrangements and thus not being 'present' as often as those not involved in parenting. However, in contrast to the longer-term impacts on women's careers. The men in this research did not experience longer-term career impacts but rather a temporary slowing of their careers. While the lack of long-term career

impacts is positive, this research did find that more organisational support is required. In particular, an organisational culture that recognises fathers and the importance of parenting and creating a workplace that enables parents to share their experiences of flexible work with each other. Furthermore, ensuring that there are clear policies to encourage flexible work, including support for managers and teams to better implement flexible practices for their team.

This thesis stemmed from the desire to understand how fathers can take on greater role caring for their children, thus also enabling more women to have successful careers alongside parenting – perhaps to advance the slow societal shifts taking place. In providing insight and recommendations that facilitate the uptake of flexible work practices and acknowledging parenthood, this could contribute to a strong culture of support for fathers, better enabling them to take a more hands-on role without fear of career repercussions or discrimination. This is likely to be beneficial for both the family unit and the organisation through the development and satisfaction of employees, with potential benefits to recruitment and retention. There are also likely to be broader societal benefits; for women, this may help reduce inequity and discrimination, and at a societal level, this may help with higher levels of employment and wider equality. This is thought to be a strong starting point for change; however, further research will also be needed to follow up on what improvements may be required both in different industries and at a regulatory level in order to reach the goal of enabling parents to maintain satisfying careers, while also balancing a strong family focus, should they wish.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

18 September 2023

Katherine Ravenswood
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Katherine

Re Ethics Application: **23/268 Impacts of involved fatherhood on careers**

Thank you for your responses to AUTEC's conditions.

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 18 September 2026.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC.
2. All public facing documents must have the AUTEC approval number and be of a high standard of spelling and grammar. Dates on the Information Sheet(s) and Consent Form(s) must be consistent.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented.
4. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.
5. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project.
6. Any serious or adverse events must be reported to AUTEC, this includes unforeseen issues that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
7. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management permission for access from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted and you need to meet all ethical, legal, public health, and locality obligations or requirements for the jurisdictions in which the research is being undertaken.

The application number and title need to be referenced on all correspondence related to this project.

All forms are available online http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz
(This is a computer-generated letter for which no signature is required)

The AUTEC Secretariat
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: pcw4540@aut.ac.nz

Auckland University of Technology, D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, New Zealand.
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316 E: ethics@aut.ac.nz www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:
27 June 2023
Project Title
Impacts of involved fatherhood on careers
An Invitation
Thank you for your interest in this research. I am Amy Rosser a student at AUT University and this research is being completed as part of the AUT Master of Business qualification, in which I need to complete a final year thesis. My research explores the career impacts of fathers who engage in flexible work as a way of enabling them to be more involved in parenting.
For this research I will be interviewing fathers who are particularly involved in the hands-on care of their children, and have needed flexibility within their roles to accommodate this. Your interest and participation in this research are valuable and I hope this research will lead to a greater understanding of the impacts of fathering careers.
If you have further questions about this research please feel free to contact me, Amy Rosser, on pcw4540@aut.ac.nz
What is the purpose of this research?
The reality of parenting is changing and increasingly it is expected that both parents will take a hands-on role in raising their children. This is a change from when traditionally, women were seen as primarily responsible for the unpaid work in the household, including the care of children and men were seen as the source of financial support for the family and more recently when women have still been primarily responsible for childcare in families – even when they also work. Because of this, most of the research into how careers can be impacted by parenting is about the impacts on mothers due to the traditional views around motherhood and unpaid labour. Instead, this research will look at the career experiences of involved fathers. It seeks to find out what impacts the requirement for flexibility has on the careers of fathers who take on a significant percentage of the childcare responsibilities for their children. It is hoped that this may

bring to light some of the issues that prevent more fathers taking an equal responsibility for their children.

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

You are being invited to participate in this research as you have indicated an interest in participating in the research or have been identified by another party as being an appropriate, potential participant for this research. This may be in response to seeing an 'ad' for participants. You have self-identified as an engaged father, that is, one who is highly engaged in the active day-to-day care of their children, and accessible and responsive to their emotional, physical and mental needs.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

Once you have reviewed this information, if you are willing to take part in this research, you can contact me, Amy, on pcw450@aut.ac.nz . Once you confirm that you would like to take part in the research I will send you a consent form to review. Please read this, seek any clarifications about the research, and return a signed copy to me either over email, or prior to the commencement of the interview, in person, you can sign a hard copy of the form.

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 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?

As a participant in this research, you will take part in an interview of approximately one hour. During this time you will be asked questions about your parenting involvement, your motivations behind being an involved parent, your career and relationships within your organisations. This interview will be recorded and during the interview notes will be taken. After the interview, if you wish, you can review the transcript. You will have one week in which to do so.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There are no risks or expectations of discomfort by participating in this research. However, if you do feel that this is causing any discomfort or stress, please feel comfortable to not answer any sensitive questions, take a break, or even to ask to stop the interview at any time. On completion of transcription you will be able to review the transcript prior to its inclusion in the wider results if you wish.

What are the benefits?

There is little known about the impacts on men's' careers due to their identity as fathers. Your participation in this research will contribute to the knowledge in this area and may be useful for those who are becoming fathers or considering how to navigate their careers as involved fathers. More widely, it is hoped that this research will improve the support for working fathers, and inform workplace in developing more equitable support systems for parents. It is also hoped this may encourage more fathers to take on a hands-on role in

raising their children which has beneficial outcomes for the health and wellbeing of all members of the family unit, as well as more wide-reaching benefits that mean more women are able to take part in the paid workforce, providing economic benefit and equitable opportunities. As a researcher this research will also benefit me, as it will be a key component of my qualification, assisting me in graduating with my Master of Business programme.

How will my privacy be protected?

In this research a pseudonym will be used to identify both yourself, and in place of the names of any organisations that may come up in the process of this interview. No true names will be used in order to protect the privacy of the participant. Your details will not be shared in any final reports and those who have access to the transcripts or interviews will be bound by confidentiality agreements.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

This requires approximately one hour of your time, there will be no further costs to participation.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

Once you have indicated you would like to participate, you will have two weeks to ask further questions and read over the consent form.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If you would like to view the results of this research, a summary will be available. Please indicate your interest by ticking the appropriate option 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, *Katherine Ravenswood, Professor of Industrial relations, +64 9 921 9999*

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , (+649) 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:

Amy Rosser, pcw4540@aut.ac.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Katherine Ravenswood, Katherine.ravensowood@aut.ac.nz, *+64 9 921 9999*

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *18 September 2023* AUTEC Reference number 23/268

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Indicative Questions

"Impacts of involved fatherhood on careers"
July 2023

These questions will be used when interviewing participants. This is a 'semi-structured', face-to-face interview. The questions are deliberately broad in order to allow for the participants to contribute to the direction of the findings, by bringing in their own social and cultural context and ensuring they can tell the story that is important to them.

Broadly, the topics covered will be:

- The participant's involvement in childcare and the factors that contributed to them taking on a significant role in this.
- Their current and past employment, and career, and how they structured this around childcare.
- Their experiences within their career including social, financial, progression and other relevant factors and how they feel this has been impacted by their parental role, if at all.
- How their organisations have reacted to their needs for support.

Part 1.
Introductions

- Introduce myself.
- Remind them of the consent form and ensure they are comfortable to proceed and that it is signed or recorded.
- Any questions?
- Reminder they can pause, skip, stop or withdraw at any time.
- Switch on recording and start interview (checking for permission first).

Part 2.
Interview
Background to career, family and job history

- Please tell me about yourself and your role in childcare in your family.

a. How did you decide to take on flexible work in order to be a more involved father?
b. How is the care divided between yourself and any other relevant people e.g the other parent, or other family members.
c. How are tasks divided
d. Has this changed over your career/ the child's life?
e. Any thing else you think I should know about that?

- What made you decide to become a highly involved father?

a. How do you think this has impacted on your family?

- Please tell me a bit about your career and job history

a. What industry are you in
b. Level of seniority
c. Environment of work e.g field work/office based
d. Which role were you in when you had children and how long ago was this?

- What kind of flexibility did/do you need due to your childcare responsibilities? E.g. hours, timing of hours, start/finish times, work location, parental leave etc.

a. Has this changed over time?
b. How did you arrange this with your manager/employer?

i. Is it agreed formally with your organisation or informal in nature?

Personal Experience

- Challenges of combining involved father and working

a. What are some of the challenges that may have impacted you being an involved working father
b. Impression of how reputation has been impacted
c. How have managers/supervisors responded to your request for flexible work around childcare?

i. What about colleagues?
ii. other people (friends, family etc)
iii. Has it affected the way in which you socialise at work?

- Tell me about how you made the decision to work flexibly and prioritise parenting

a. How did the process of getting flexible work go?
b. Formal or informal flexi
c. Was it easy or a challenge?
d. Did you feel supported by your organisation when you became a parent?
e. Did this change over time or did they maintain that attitude toward your flexibility?

- So you've said how it came about, How has your career has been impacted by your role as a parent?

a. Opportunities for career advancement/progression or training opportunities
b. Applying for new jobs/how has it impacted
c. Different organisations

Reflections on supporting working parents

- Looking back, would you have made the same decisions again re flexible work and parenting?

a. Why or why not?
b. What would you do differently in hindsight?

- From your experience, what would make a really supportive workplace for working fathers?

a. Are those the same things you think would support all parents?
b. Have you seen those policies/processes/features in organisations?

- What needs to change in society for to allow more parents to have meaningful careers while still being involved parents.
- So, you have said how we should change, how do we elevate parents' voices, so that we can reorganise work to ensure parents do not make career sacrifices
- Anything else you think I should know?

Appendix D: Consent Form

Consent Form

Project title: *Impacts of involved fatherhood on careers*

Project Supervisor: *Katherine Ravenswood*

Researcher: *Amy Rosser*

- O I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 4 August 2023
- O I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- O I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- O 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.
- O 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.
- O I agree to take part in this research.
- O I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): YesO NoO

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's Contact Details:

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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 18 September 2023 AUTEC Reference number 23/268

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form