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Mothers in Company:
The entrepreneurial motivations of self-employed mothers in Australia

Meraiah M. Foley

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Discipline of Work and Organisational Studies
University of Sydney Business School
October 2015
# Table of Contents

*Statement of Originality*  
*Acknowledgements*  
*List of Figures*  
*List of Tables*  
*Abstract*  

## Chapter One – Introduction

1.1 Overview and objectives  
1.2 Background  
1.2.1 Maternal employment in Australia  
1.2.2 Maternal self-employment in Australia  
1.3 Findings and contribution  
1.4 Structure of the thesis and chapter outline  

## Chapter Two – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction  
2.2 Women’s work patterns: choice or circumstance  
2.2.1 Preference theory: it’s all about choice  
2.2.2 Structure shapes choice  
2.2.3 Preference theory in the Australian context  
2.2.4 ‘Satisficing’: the good enough choice  
2.2.5 Adaptive preferences and the structural lag  
2.3 Women and Entrepreneurship  
2.3.1 Definitional issues in entrepreneurship  
2.3.2 Push-pull theory  
2.3.3 A gendered view of push-pull theory  
2.3.4 Entrepreneurial motivations in women  
2.3.5 Women’s business motivations in Australia  
2.3.6 ‘Mumpreneurship’  
2.4 An embedded approach to entrepreneurship research  
2.5 Conclusion
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Three – Methodology</th>
<th>80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Qualitative inquiry</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Narrative analysis</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Validating narrative analysis</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Narrative analysis in the study of women’s careers</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Data collection</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1 Recruitment and sampling</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2 Informed consent</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3 Questionnaire</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.4 The sample</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Data analysis</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.1 Data immersion</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.2 Initial codes and themes</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.3 Developing the theoretical model</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.4 Rich descriptions</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Four – Family-focused entrepreneurs</th>
<th>127</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 The importance of maternal care</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Business as a means to an end</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Not ‘just a stay-at-home mum’</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Timing, risk, and pressure</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Willingness to return to organisational employment</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Five – Career-focused-entrepreneurs</th>
<th>142</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Autonomy over work</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Financial security and professional status</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Flexibility as a secondary benefit</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Willingness to return to organisational employment</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Nine – Conclusion  
9.1 Introduction  
9.2 The significance and contribution of this research  
9.3 Research limitations and further research  
9.4 Conclusion  
Appendix 1.1 Participant Information Statement  
Appendix 1.2 Participant Consent Form  
Appendix 2.1 Questionnaire  
Appendix 2.2 Interview Protocol  
Appendix 2.3 Semi-Structured Interview Schedule  
References
Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all assistance received in the preparation of this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Meraiah M. Foley
Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to the women who so generously volunteered their time to this project, and entrusted their personal and professional histories to me. They are the heart and soul of this study, which could not have been possible without their enthusiastic participation and support.

I also wish to offer my sincerest thanks to my supervisors, Professor Marian Baird and Associate Professor Rae Cooper, who took a chance on me when I walked in off the street and pitched the idea for this project. It has been an honour and a pleasure to work with two such inspiring women who, through their mentorship, have opened doors to other exciting opportunities. I also wish to acknowledge The University of Sydney Business School, which provided generous financial and administrative assistance for this project.

To my husband Tim, I give my deepest love and gratitude. Thank you for your unfailing encouragement and care. To Helen, Suba, and all the dedicated educators and caregivers in the world, I extend my sincerest gratitude and respect.
**List of Figures**

<p>| Figure 3.1 | Recruitment and informed consent procedure | 103 |
| Figure 3.2 | Individual weekly earnings before tax (n=60) | 107 |
| Figure 3.3 | Hours worked per week (n=60) | 109 |
| Figure 3.4 | Business duration (n=60) | 111 |
| Figure 3.5 | Data Analysis | 115 |
| Figure 8.1 | Entrepreneurial motivations of self-employed mothers | 214 |
| Figure 8.2 | Family-focused entrepreneurs | 226 |
| Figure 8.3 | Career-focused entrepreneurs | 234 |
| Figure 8.4 | Opt-in entrepreneurs | 239 |
| Figure 8.5 | Forced-out entrepreneurs | 251 |
| Figure 8.6 | Choice, constraint, and satisficing in the push-pull model | 253 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Maternal employment type, by age of youngest child</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Job type and work arrangements, employed mothers (%)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Superannuation savings by employment type and gender</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Child care use by job characteristics of primary caregiver, dual-earner families</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Validity checking, mid-interview</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Initial codes and themes</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Explicit and implicit motivation cues</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Mostly pulled (family motives)</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Mostly pulled (career motives)</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Mixed motives (family and career)</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Mostly pushed (family and career)</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Characteristics of the family-focused entrepreneurs</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Characteristics of the career-focused entrepreneurs</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Characteristics of the opt-in entrepreneurs</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Characteristics of the forced-out entrepreneurs</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

The proportion of female-owned businesses has been rising steadily over the past three decades, both in Australia and around the world (ABS 2008, 2013; Kelley et al. 2013). In Australia, working women with young children are significantly more likely to be self-employed than other female workers – up to three times the rate seen in the female workforce (Baxter 2013; Baxter et al. 2007; Preston, 2001). Recent Australian studies have sought to explore the entrepreneurial motivations of female business owners generally (Weaven, Isaac & Herington 2007; Still & Walker 2006; Newton, Wood & Gottschalk 2003; Bennett & Dann 2000), but there has been little empirical research exploring the particular motivations of women who become self-employed after motherhood in Australia.

This study employs a theoretically-informed thematic analysis to the career narratives of 60 self-employed mothers to answer the central research question: What motivates some women to become self-employed after motherhood? Applying the insights provided by the sociological literature analysing issues of women’s work and family lives, and the literature on entrepreneurial motivation, specifically push-pull theory, this study proposes that women in the sample fall into four motivational categories based on the extent to which the women described their transition to self-employment as a proactive or reactive response grounded in their preferences for career or family, or both. These categories are: family-focused entrepreneurs (n=5), who are pulled into self-employment by their desire to provide exclusive, home-based maternal care for their young children, while supplementing the household income; career-focused entrepreneurs (n=4), who choose self-employment purposefully and deliberately, motivated by a desire for professional autonomy, career advancement, financial gain, or
status; opt-in entrepreneurs (n=16), who choose self-employment voluntarily, motivated mainly by a desire to create meaningful, rewarding work that does not impinge on family life; and forced-out entrepreneurs (n=35), who perceive themselves as pressed or pushed into entrepreneurship by gendered barriers within organisations and society, or other structural constraints, and therefore perceive self-employment as their only viable employment option in the labour market.

Previous studies have suggested that some mothers use self-employment as a deliberate strategy to balance their work and family commitments (Ekinsmyth 2013a, 2011; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013; Craig & Powell 2010; Baxter et al. 2007; Cromie & Hayes 1988; Goffee & Scase 1985). This study is significant in its finding that women’s motivations for becoming self-employed after motherhood are heterogeneous, and do not fit a single, family-driven narrative. Although nearly every woman in the study ended up using self-employment to accommodate the daily needs and rhythms of her children, there was considerable variation in the extent to which the participants framed self-employment as a deliberate choice. For the majority of the women in this study, the decision to become self-employed – as opposed to seeking other forms of employment – was grounded in a complex interplay between their preferences for career and family, made in a context of constraint, rather than choice.
Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Overview and objectives

Women with young children are significantly more likely to be self-employed than other working women in Australia (Baxter et al. 2007; Bell & La Valle 2003; Preston 2001), at least for a period of their lives (Baxter 2013a). Nearly one-quarter of working mothers with a child under age 12 engage in self-employment, compared to around 9 percent of the female workforce as a whole (ABS 2015; Baxter 2013a). Although self-employed women enjoy greater levels of autonomy and flexibility, and better work-life balance than other female workers (Álvarez & Sinde-Cantorna 2014; Baines & Gelder 2003), there is also evidence that becoming self-employed has negative long-term implications for women’s earnings (D. R. Williams 2000), retirement savings (Clare 2008), and future employment prospects (Koellinger et al. 2015). Self-employment is often touted by policy makers (Massola 2015) and in the popular media (Allan 2013; Davies 2011; Methven 2014; Morrison 2013; Seow 2104) as the ideal solution for women struggling to balance the demands of paid work and family life, but there have been few empirical attempts to understand the factors that motivate women to make the transition to self-employment after motherhood.

Studies of maternal self-employment are relatively rare, both in Australia and internationally. Much of the research on maternal employment in Australia has tended to focus on women’s labour force participation within organisations, with particular emphasis on the relatively high concentration of working mothers in part-time and
casual employment¹ (Abhayaratna et al. 2008; Gray & Baxter 2011; van Wanrooy 2005; Pocock 2003). However, mothers of young children participate in self-employment at an average rate of 23.4 percent, compared to 19.2 percent in casual employment (Baxter 2013a). The disproportionate concentration of women with young children participating in self-employment suggests that women do transition from organisational employment to self-employment, and that maternal self-employment is a phenomenon worthy of separate research attention.

It has been argued (and at times contested) that being female is no longer as significant a barrier to success in traditional organisational careers, but that being a mother – or a caregiver, more generally – is now the greater impediment (Budig, Misra & Boeckmann 2012; Folbre 2001; Pocock 2006, 2003; Crittenden 2001). Recent research suggests that women with caregiving responsibilities face a particular ‘motherhood bar’ (Stone 2007) or ‘motherhood penalty’ (Budig, Misra & Boeckmann 2012; Correll, Benard & Paik 2007; Drolet 2002; Livermore, Rodgers & Siminski 2011) in terms of the hiring, advancement, and salary expectations of mothers’ working within organisations. Other research suggests that these factors compel some mothers to alter or scale back their career ambitions (Corby & Stanworth 2009; Mainiero & Sullivan 2006, 2005; Shapiro, Ingols & Blake-Beard 2008; Walsh 1999) or ‘opt-out’ of paid employment entirely (Belkin 2003; Cabrera 2007; Perry-Jenkins, Repetti & Crouter 2000; Stone 2007). Thus, in terms of organisational employment, the research suggests that mothers face particular discrimination when compared to fathers, as well as men and women without children (Correll, Benard & Paik 2007; Budig, Misra & Boeckmann

¹ The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines casual employees as those who do not receive any paid sick leave or holiday benefit entitlements. Casual workers often have no guarantee of continuing employment, and enjoy fewer benefit entitlements than permanent employees (either full- or part-time). Amongst Australia’s 9.3 million workers, 2.2 million (24 percent) were employed casually in 2011 (ABS 2011 cited by Skinner, Hutchinson & Pocock 2012, p.49).
alternately, women with young children have been shown to self-select into organisational roles which require less skill and time investment, and which are more poorly rewarded, both financially and in terms of career advancement (Corby & Stanworth 2009; Walsh 1999).

Another option, as the data demonstrates, is to become self-employed. This path has received much less attention in the extant literature. Just a handful of studies from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe have begun to explore the specific experiences of self-employed mothers. By and large, these studies have argued that women who become self-employed after falling pregnant or having children do so in order to balance the demands of paid work and family life, or to integrate the domains of ‘work’ and ‘family’ into a single sphere (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013; Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013). The findings from these mainly qualitative studies are supported by recent quantitative analyses of time use patterns and child care usage among working mothers in Australia, which suggest that self-employed women spend less time engaged in paid work, and significantly more time on housework and child care than women who are employed within organisations (Craig & Powell 2010; Baxter et al. 2007).

These studies help to understand how women perceive and experience self-employment, once they have adopted that working arrangement, but the question of why women with children become self-employed in the first place is less understood. This study elaborates on these previous studies by exploring whether women who make the transition to self-employment after motherhood regard it as a conscious and deliberate choice made to maximise certain career- or family-related goals, or whether
they perceive self-employment as a more reactive and reluctant response to certain constraints or circumstances beyond their control.

This study is concerned with understanding the factors that motivate women to make the transition to self-employment, as opposed to seeking out other forms of employment. Thus, it is guided by the central research question:

*What motivates some women to become self-employed after motherhood?*

To answer this question, this study applies the insights from two distinct fields of literature: first, the sociological literature around women, work, and family, with particular focus on the issues that affect women’s participation in the labour market; and second, the literature on entrepreneurial motivation, particularly push-pull theory, which seeks to understand the factors that drive people to start their own businesses or become self-employed, as opposed to seeking out other forms of employment.

Accordingly, the two sub-questions examined in this study are:

i. In terms of the dominant explanations offered by the sociological literature on women, work, and family are women who make the transition to self-employment after motherhood motivated by career or family concerns, or both? Is the transition a function of choice, or constraint?

ii. In terms of the dominant explanations offered by the entrepreneurial literature, are women who become self-employed after motherhood *pulled* by the intrinsic benefits of entrepreneurship, or are they *pushed* into self-employment by gendered barriers or structural constraints?
These questions are answered by applying a theoretically-informed thematic analysis to the career narratives of 60 women who made the transition to self-employment after falling pregnant or having a child come into their care. The aim of this research is to examine the motivations of a particular subset of the female workforce in Australia – women with dependent children who are self-employed – using qualitative tools to paint a rich, nuanced portrait of the self-employment decision, and to explore the interplay between push and pull, preference and constraint in the transition (Mallon & Cohen 2001; Kirkwood 2009; Dawson & Henley 2012).

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Maternal employment in Australia

To understand the interest in maternal employment, generally, and maternal self-employment in particular, it is necessary to understand the changing employment context of working mothers in Australia. The employment of women with children has been increasing steadily over the past several decades. Among couple families with children under the age of 18, the proportion of mothers employed in the labour market rose from 55 percent in 1991 to 59 percent in 2001, and then to 65 percent in 2011 (Baxter 2013b). The birth or adoption of a child very often brings about significant changes to the paid employment of women. Studies of large-scale demographic data demonstrate that mothers commonly withdraw from the labour market or reduce their hours of work following the birth of a child (Gray & Baxter 2011). Maternal labour force participation has also been shown to be strongly related to the age of the youngest child in the family, dropping sharply after the birth of a child and rising as the child grows older (Baxter 2008, 2013b, 2013a; Gray & Baxter 2011).
Although maternal employment rates in Australia have increased in recent years, rates of employment for women with younger children remain somewhat below average levels for countries within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Baxter 2013b; Baxter & Renda 2011; OECD 2006). In 2009, the rate of employment for mothers of children under the age of 15 in Australia was 62 percent, slightly below the OECD’s average maternal employment rate of 66 percent. For mothers with children under the age of 3, employment rates in Australia were 47.4 percent, compared to the OECD average of 51.4 percent (Baxter 2014). The question of how to encourage mothers into the labour force has been an object of considerable attention among scholars and policy makers concerned about boosting Australia’s economic productivity and expanding the supply of labour to address the country’s ageing population (Baxter 2014, 2013a, 2013b).

One significant feature of maternal employment in Australia is the relatively high incidence of part-time and casual employment among working women. In 2011, 38.5 percent of employed women worked part-time in Australia, compared to the OECD average of 26 percent (Baxter 2014). The part-time employment rate for women is higher than the OECD average across all ages, but is especially so between the ages of 25 and 44, women’s peak childbearing and childrearing years (Baxter 2014).

A majority of Australian mothers with young children express a preference for reduced working hours (Skinner & Pocock 2014; Qu & Weston 2005; Drago, Tseng & Wooden 2004; Evans & Kelley 2002) or home-based work (Kelley et al. 2010, 2009), as these arrangements are seen to be more beneficial to the development of children (Kelley et al. 2010), and to produce greater satisfaction with work-family balance (Baxter et al. 2007). It has also been suggested that the high incidence of part-time and
casual work among working mothers may also reflect negative perceptions about the nature of full-time work in Australia, which is associated with long working hours and organisational cultures that are unfriendly to family life (McDonald, Bradley & Guthrie 2006; van Wanrooy 2005; Pocock 2006, 2003).

Some scholars have expressed concern, however, about the longer-term effects of part-time and casual employment on women’s incomes and career prospects over the life course. Using longitudinal wage data, Chalmers and Hill (2007) find, for example, that part-time work experiences do not convert into financial rewards once those individuals transfer into full-time jobs; rather engaging in part-time work generally *impinges* on long-term wage growth. Similarly, scholars have expressed concerns about the limited protections and entitlements (such as paid leave or redundancy pay) of casual employment, which also offers fewer opportunities for career advancement or development, and less overall security than permanent employment, resulting in potential economic hardships later in life (Charlesworth et al. 2011).

Other scholars have argued that mothers face discrimination from employers on account of their caregiving responsibilities. Recent laboratory and field experiments from the United States suggest that mothers are significantly disadvantaged when seeking employment, receiving about half as many call-backs for interviews as equally qualified women without children, as well as men with and without children (Correll, Benard & Paik 2007, p.1333). Once employed, mothers also appear to face significant unexplained wage penalties. For example, drawing on large-scale, nationally representative data from the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey, Livermore et al. (2011) have identified an unexplained motherhood wage penalty of around 5 percent for one child, and 9 percent for two or more children. This
is consistent with international studies (Budig, Misra & Boeckmann 2012; Budig & England 2001; Drolet 2002; Harkness & Waldfogel 1999) which have also found that women with children earn lower wages than their male or female counterparts without children, even when controlled for length of working experience or time spent out of the workforce. Budig and England argue that the unexplained portion of the wage penalties experienced by mothers “probably results from the effect of motherhood on productivity and/or from discrimination by employers against mothers” (2001, p.204).

1.2.2 Maternal self-employment in Australia

Against this backdrop, self-employment is often presented as a novel solution to the now-clichéd conundrum of ‘having it all’; or how to pursue a successful, financially-rewarding career and contribute to the broader social objective of economic productivity, while maintaining the flexibility to accommodate the competing social objective of raising children and participating in family life. Self-employment is frequently touted in the popular media (Allan 2013; Davies 2011; Methven 2014; Morrison 2013; Seow 2104) and by policy makers (Massola 2015) as the panacea for mothers seeking to negotiate paid employment and family life. Promising new tax cuts for small business owners, Australia’s federal minister for small business, Bruce Billson, declared in 2015, for example, that self-employed mothers were, “leading the way in navigating new technology, new business opportunities, and the perennial challenge of balancing economic and family goals” (Massola 2015).

As discussed in Section 1.1, working mothers – especially mothers of infants and young children – have demonstrably higher rates of self-employment than other working women. Data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), a nationally-representative survey of Australian families, has found that nearly one-
quarter of women with children under age 12 engage in self-employment (Baxter 2013a), as shown in Table 1.1, compared to an average of 9 percent in the female workforce generally (ABS 2013a, 2015). Mothers in couple households are more likely to engage in self-employment than lone mothers (Baxter et al. 2007), and are also more likely to engage in self-employment if their partner is also self-employed (Baxter 2013a). In 2012, 89.6 percent of female business owners with dependent children were married or living with a partner, compared to 10.4 percent who were lone parents (ABS 2013b). Mothers are also more likely to engage in self-employment if they have more than two children, or a disabled family member (Baxter 2013a). This is consistent with international research, which has found that female self-employment rates are positively associated with marriage and the presence of children (Leung 2006; Wellington 2006).

Table 1.1 Maternal employment type, by age of youngest child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of youngest child (years)</th>
<th>Self-employed %</th>
<th>Permanent %</th>
<th>Casual %</th>
<th>Employed %</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
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<td>58.5</td>
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<td>3,759</td>
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</table>

Source: (Baxter 2013a, p.34, LSAC Waves 1-4, B and K cohorts)
Self-employment appears to confer many benefits to working mothers. International research has found that mothers with children are more likely than other workers to cite the need for flexibility as a main factor in becoming self-employed (Boden 1999). Within Australia, self-employed mothers do report considerably higher levels of flexibility and autonomy than mothers who are permanent or casual employees (Baxter 2013a; Baxter et al. 2007). In general, self-employed mothers work substantially fewer hours than mothers who are permanently employed (19.2 hours per week, compared to 27.1 hours per week), but more hours than casual workers (15.1 hours per week) (Baxter et al. 2007). Self-employed mothers are also considerably more likely to report having control over their working hours and conditions, as illustrated in Table 1.2. More than 90 percent of self-employed mothers report being able to vary their starting or finish times, and to work flexibly, compared to 43.6 percent of mothers who are permanent employees and 51.6 percent of casual employees (Baxter et al. 2007). Self-employed mothers are also more likely than their counterparts in permanent or casual employment to report working evenings and weekends.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work arrangements</th>
<th>Self-employed</th>
<th>Permanent employee</th>
<th>Casual employee</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can change start/finish times, works flexible hours</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can change start/finish times with approval in special circumstances</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely or not able to change start/finish times</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes works evenings/night</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes works weekends</td>
<td>64.3</td>
<td>48.4</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean hours worked</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Baxter et al. 2007, p.25, LSAC 2004, Wave 1)

Note: Includes both the infant and the 4-5 year old cohort
Recent research from Spain has found that self-employed women generally report higher levels of job satisfaction, generally attributable to the higher degree of autonomy experienced in self-employment. But once the results are controlled for flexibility and autonomy, the positive effects of self-employment on job satisfaction disappear and become negative (Álvarez & Sinde-Cantorna 2014). Bell and La Valle (2003) suggest that the positive effects of autonomy and flexibility in self-employment are largely offset by less predictable working hours, more frequent interruptions, financial stress, and social isolation. With particular respect to self-employed parents, however, Baines and Gelder (2003) argue that less regular working hours do not appear to come at the expense of family life, since self-employed parents have significantly more freedom than other workers to determine how and when to do their work. Self-employed mothers in Australia have been found to experience lower levels of negative work-family ‘spill-over’, or interference from work on family life, compared to permanent or casual employees, although it is not clear what factors influence this situation (Baxter 2013a).

On the downside, a large majority of self-employed women in Australia have been found to have either no retirement savings\(^2\), or very low savings of less than AUD$40,000 (Clare 2008, p.7), as illustrated in Table 1.3. Self-employed women generally perceive their employment as less secure than permanent employment, but no less so than casual employment. However, self-employed women appear less likely

\(^2\) The majority of individual retirement, or superannuation, savings in Australia are accrued through compulsory contributions made by an employer to an employee’s private account. In 2015, employers, regardless of size, were mandated to pay 9.5 percent of an employee’s salary or wage into superannuation. This requirement extends to permanent employees and casual employees who earn more than AUD$450 per calendar month. The compulsory superannuation requirement does not apply to individuals who are own account workers, i.e. self-employed in unincorporated businesses.
than casual workers to transition back into permanent employment when their children are older (Baxter 2013a), although the reasons for this are unclear.

Table 1.3 Superannuation savings by employment type and gender (% population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Superannuation</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wage and salary earners</td>
<td>Wage and salary earners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>% pop</td>
<td>% pop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Clare 2008, p.7, Unit record file for the ABS 2005-06 Survey of Income and Housing)

Note: Low balance is defined as less than AUD$40,000, High balance is defined as more than AUD$100,000, and Mid balance lies between high and low.

These figures raise potential concerns about the long-term financial security of self-employed women, although Australian research in this area is extremely limited. Recent international research has found, however, that the median wages of self-employed workers are lower, by a variety of measures, than salaried workers (Hamilton 2000), and that even short spells of self-employment lead to substantial wage penalties upon return to permanent employment for both women (D. R. Williams 2000) and men (Hyytinen & Rouvinen 2008; Bruce & Schuetze 2004) – if they are able to return at all. A recent field experiment from the United Kingdom has found that self-employed workers are significantly less likely than permanent employees to be called for an interview when applying for salaried jobs, suggesting that self-employment conveys a negative signal to employers. Thus, women who elect to become self-employed temporarily may find themselves involuntarily “locked in” to self-employment over the longer term because of their reduced marketability as employees (Koellinger et al. 2015, p.151).

There is also evidence to suggest that female self-employment reinforces traditional gender norms. In Australia, public support for maternal employment has
been found to be 30 percentage points higher if the mother works from home (Kelley et al. 2010), which is frequently the case with self-employment (AIFS 2008). But recent time use scholarship has found that mothers who work from home spend significantly less time in paid work and more time on child care activities than both mothers who work outside the home, and men who work from home (Craig & Powell 2010).

One possible interpretation of this finding is that women use self-employment as a conscious strategy to remain in paid work while maximising the time they spend with their children. Another possible interpretation, however, is that working from home erodes women’s participation in paid work more subtly, by creating more favourable conditions for women to assume a greater share of their socially-ordained domestic responsibilities (Osnowitz 2005). Women may be opting in to self-employment voluntarily, or in response to a lack of work-family balance in organisational employment. Either way, self-employment among mothers appears to reinforce traditional gender distributions within couple households, rather than leading to a redistribution of paid and unpaid work among men and women (Craig & Powell 2010).

For example, dual-earner households where the primary caregiver is self-employed are the least likely to use external forms of child care, including formal care (e.g. child care centre, family day care, occasional care) and informal care (e.g. grandparent or other relative; nanny or friend; gymnasium or leisure centre) care. A recent review of child care usage among working families, shown in Table 1.4, suggests that more than half of primary caregivers who are self-employed (56.4 percent) use only parental care to look after their infant children, compared to 37.5 percent of primary caregivers who are casual employees and 19.8 percent of primary caregivers who are permanent employees (Baxter et al. 2007).
Table 1.4: Child care use by job characteristics of primary caregiver, dual-earner families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parental care only %</th>
<th>Formal care only %</th>
<th>Informal care only %</th>
<th>Formal and informal %</th>
<th>Number of observations (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>56.4</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent employee</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual employee</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Baxter et al. 2007, p.34, LSAC 2004, Wave One)

However, primary caregivers who are self-employed and use only parental care tend to have spouses or partners who are less likely to engage in child care than dual-earner households where the primary caregiver is a permanent or casual employee. That is, self-employed primary caregivers are more likely working while caring for their children, rather than dovetailing care with a partner (Baxter et al. 2007, p.35). Self-employed women, more than other types of working mothers, appear to integrate paid work and caregiving into a single sphere (Ekinsmyth 2011), but in doing so, may also be reinforcing gendered divisions of labour. Whether these arrangements are a function of choice, a voluntary strategy to structure paid work around family life, or a more subtle function of the normative assumptions around women’s domestic roles, remains an open question.

The research on maternal self-employment in Australia is, to date, somewhat limited. It is clear that a small but significant number of women with children use self-employment to balance their work and family lives. The question of why some women make the transition to self-employment after motherhood is less clear. Is self-employment a deliberate, proactive strategy to pursue particular career or family goals, or both? Or is self-employment a reluctant, reactive response to certain constraints or barriers relating to career or family, or both? This study aims to answer these questions.
1.3 Findings and Contribution

It has been suggested that self-employed mothers use this working arrangement in order to balance their work and family commitments (Baxter et al. 2007; Craig & Powell 2010; Cromie & Hayes 1988; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Ekinsmyth 2013a, 2011; Wellington 2006; Goffee & Scase 1985; Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013). This study argues that women's motivations for becoming self-employed after motherhood are heterogeneous, and do not follow a single, family-focused narrative. Family obligations and pressures are found to be a significant impetus in the transition to self-employment after motherhood, but there is considerable variation in the degree to which women perceive their self-employment as a proactive choice, a conscious decision to balance work and family, or a reactive response to a gendered roadblocks in workplaces, or other structural constraints that acted to push them out of organisational employment in the first instance.

Studies of maternal self-employment have been relatively rare in Australia, both in the context of the sociological literature concerning women's work and family lives (Baxter 2013a; Craig & Powell 2010; Baxter et al. 2007), and in the context of the entrepreneurship literature (Still & Walker 2006; Still, Soutar & Walker 2005; Still & Timms 2000). This study marks the first attempt to paint a rich, nuanced portrait of the entrepreneurial motivations of self-employed mothers in Australia, drawing on the first-hand narratives of self-employed mothers. Rather than examining how women accommodate their work and family responsibilities within self-employment, this study is unique in its exploration of why some mothers become self-employed after motherhood. It finds that although many self-employed mothers end up organising their working lives to accommodate their family lives, there is considerable variation in the
extent to which women perceive the move to self-employment as a positive, deliberate, or even desirable, one.

1.4 Structure of the thesis and chapter outline

This thesis applies the insights from two distinct fields of scholarship to the self-employment narratives of 60 women to answer the central research question: what motivates some women to become self-employed after motherhood? Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework for this analysis, examining first the sociological literature on women, work, and family, particularly as it concerns women’s movements in the labour market, and second, the literature on entrepreneurial motivation, particularly push-pull theory, the dominant framework for understanding the start-up process, and the particular factors that influence the entrepreneurial decision in women. Chapter Three provides an overview of the methodological approach employed in this study – thematic narrative analysis – followed by a demographic profile of the 60 women who participated in this study, and detailed explication of the data analysis procedure. As a result of the data analysis, this study proposes that women’s motivations for becoming self-employed after motherhood are heterogeneous. Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven provide rich descriptions of the four main motivational groups identified in the analysis. Chapter Eight proposes a theoretical model of women’s self-employment motivations after motherhood, and provides in-depth discussion of each of the four motivational groups. Implications, areas for further research, and the limitations of the study are explored in Chapter Nine.
Chapter Two:

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research aims to understand the factors that motivate some women to become self-employed after motherhood in Australia. As discussed in Chapter One, women with young children are significantly more likely to engage in self-employment than other female workers (Baxter et al. 2007; Bell & La Valle 2003; Preston 2001), at least for a period of their lives (Baxter 2013a). Self-employed women appear to organise their time to balance their paid work with the daily demands of caregiving (Baxter et al. 2007; Craig & Powell 2010), and may receive some psychological benefits from their newfound autonomy and flexibility (Álvarez & Sinde-Cantorna 2014; Baines & Gelder 2003). However, there is also evidence to suggest that self-employment has negative long-term implications for women’s earnings (D. R. Williams 2000), retirement savings (Clare 2008), and future employment prospects (Koellinger et al. 2015).

The question of why some women become self-employed after motherhood is less well understood. It is not clear, for example, whether women undertake the transition to self-employment after motherhood proactively and deliberately, to advance some particular career or family-related goals, or whether the transition to self-employment is a reactive and reluctant move, made in response to seemingly intractable circumstances or barriers. This study seeks to explore this question by applying the insights from two distinct fields of literature: first, the mainly sociological literature around women, work, and family, with particular focus on the issues that
affect women’s participation in the labour market; and second, the literature on entrepreneurial motivation, particularly push-pull theory, the dominant framework for understanding the start-up process, paying particular attention to the influences on women’s entrepreneurship.

To date, much of the research on women’s labour force participation in Australia has tended to focus on the factors that influence women’s employment within organisations; with particular focus on women’s disproportionate concentration in part-time or casual employment. This body of research has sought to understand to what extent women’s decisions with respect to balancing work and family are a reflection of intrinsic preferences, or social or institutional constraints. Women’s self-employment, or entrepreneurship, is largely overlooked in this conversation. The research presented here seeks to overlay the insights from the sociological literature around choice and constraint on the dominant push-pull theory of entrepreneurial motivation, which also places the start-up decision on a spectrum of willingness, and by so doing to develop a new framework for understanding why some women make the transition to self-employment after motherhood.

To understand why some women move to self-employment, as opposed to other forms of work, after having children, it is first necessary to review the explanations in the literature on women’s employment patterns overall. This chapter begins with a review of the sociological and economic arguments around choice theory, paying special attention to the Australian context. This review will contend that the rational choice, or ‘preference’, theory favoured by some (Hakim 1995, 2000, 2002, 2006, in particular, 2011) obscures the complexity and gendered nature of women’s employment decisions. Instead, this thesis argues for a framework that recognises the ‘bounded’ (Simon 1956;
Brown 2004) or ‘adaptive’ (Moen & Yu 2000; Leahy & Doughney 2006) nature of these choices.

The chapter continues with an examination and critique of the current arguments surrounding the dominant push-pull theory of entrepreneurial motivation, paying special focus to the findings on female entrepreneurship in Australia (Bennett & Dann 2000; Newton, Wood & Gottschalk 2003; Still & Walker 2006; Weaven, Isaac & Herington 2007; Walker, Wang & Redmond 2008), and demonstrating the lack of empirical research around maternal self-employment in Australia. The review continues by highlighting a small but growing body of literature that has emerged from the United Kingdom examining the experiences and motivations of a particular subset of self-employed mothers – the so-called ‘mumpreneurs’ – who deliberately configure their businesses around their caregiving responsibilities, thereby drawing paid work and reproduction into a single sphere (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013). The literature review concludes by advancing the argument put forth by these scholars and others (de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007; Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013) for an approach to the study of entrepreneurial motivation that recognises the influence of the household, or family, structures in which the entrepreneurial process is embedded (Aldrich & Cliff 2003).

2.2 Women’s work patterns: choice or circumstance?

Most of the research on female employment patterns, both in Australia and abroad, has tended to focus on women’s work as employees working for large, medium, and small businesses. In particular, this research has tended to examine women’s
disproportionate concentration in lower-skilled, lower-paid, part-time work, and whether this is a reflection of what women want or a product of the structural forces that constrain them. There is also a considerable body of literature about women’s use of flexible working arrangements, but this again has tended to focus on women’s employment within organisations.

One focal point of this debate in recent decades has been British sociologist and labour economist Catherine Hakim’s assertion that lifestyle orientations and preferences are the key explanatory variables in women’s work patterns, particularly their concentration in part-time work (Hakim 1995, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2011). In her defining work, Work-Lifestyle Choices in the 21st Century, Hakim (2000) argues that women, for the first time in history, are free to make choices about how to combine work, family, and leisure, and that their workplace participation patterns are a direct reflection of their personal preferences. Hakim’s thesis has provoked considerable dissent among researchers who contend that women have never enjoyed the luxury of truly unconstrained choices, and remain held back by the gendered nature of homes, schools, and workplaces.

2.2.1 Preference theory: all about choice

After a decade working in the British Department of Employment as a labour market analyst, Hakim became convinced that the fundamental facts of women’s work patterns contradicted what she saw as a prevailing set of beliefs advanced by feminists pressing for workplace reforms. Those beliefs, or ‘myths’ as Hakim labelled them, were as follows: that the rate at which women were participating in the workforce was climbing steadily and would eventually reach a state of near parity with men; that a majority of women preferred to work full-time rather than stay at home to manage
domestic affairs; and that the only thing holding these women back was workplace discrimination or the absence of quality, affordable childcare (Hakim 1995).

Using labour force participation data from multiple European countries (Hakim 1995, 2000), as well as surveys and structured interviews with 2,900 working-age men and women in Britain (Hakim 2002), Hakim argues that women in rich, modern societies do not act as a homogeneous group, bound by the same goals or desires with respect to paid work (Hakim 1995, 2000, 2002, 2006). Instead, women living in advanced economies are enjoying a ‘qualitatively new scenario’ (Hakim 2002, p.433) of unprecedented freedom and choice thanks to five historical developments that have transformed women’s place in society. The five developments include: the advent of hormonal contraception, giving sexually active women reliable control over their fertility; the rise of equal opportunity protections in the workplace, opening up pathways previously off-limits to women; the expansion of white-collar jobs, which are more attractive to and physically accessible to women than manual, blue-collar jobs; the creation of more part-time and flexible job options due to workplace deregulation; and finally, but perhaps least tangibly, the “increasing importance of attitudes, values, and personal preferences in the lifestyle choices of prosperous, liberal, modern societies” (Hakim 2002, pp.433–434).

Under this new scenario, Hakim argues, women enjoy an unprecedented degree of individual agency, and women’s attitudes and preferences are reflected in the way they behave in the labour market. Drawing on statistical analysis of women’s employment patterns, Hakim asserts that women in all modern societies, across all socio-economic groups, fall into three distinct groups based on the extent to which they want to devote themselves to either paid work or family life: home-centred women...
(around 20 percent); work-centred women (around 20 percent); and adaptive women (around 60 percent) (Hakim 2002, pp.434–436). Employment – or participation in public life – is central to the work-centred woman, who can be expected to engage in full-time work regardless of whether she marries or has children, although women with no children are generally concentrated in this group. The home-centred woman is very unlikely to return to paid employment after becoming a mother, unless financial circumstances compel her to do so. Home-centred women typically hold traditionalist views of motherhood, which may include moral objections to the idea of working whilst raising a family.

The majority of women, however, take an adaptive stance to work and family life, combining part-time work and household duties to varying degrees in pursuit of what Hakim calls the ‘marriage career’ (Hakim 1995, p.434). Unlike the work-centred woman who prioritises her career above all else, the adaptive woman does not press for advancement in her career because she does not want it, especially if it comes at the expense of her family or personal life. Most women, Hakim argues, are more concerned with living a balanced life (in the case of the adaptive women) or looking after their families (in the case of the home-centred women), than achieving success in their careers. Under this ‘qualitatively new scenario’ of choice for women in the labour market, Hakim argues that women’s disproportionate concentration in lower-paying, lower-skilled, part-time jobs is not a result of sex discrimination or a lack of child care options, but rather a result of women’s pronounced preferences for family and other life aspirations over career goals (Hakim 2000, 2002, 2006, p.280).
2.2.2 Structure shapes choice

The matter of choices, and the degree to which women are truly free to make them, has been the subject of debate among feminist thinkers for more than a century. The British philosopher and political economist John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), in his treatise, *The Subjection of Women*, famously scoffed at the idea that a woman’s talents or predilections could be seen as anything other than a construct of the patriarchal society that reared her. Rejecting the idea that women are naturally inclined to the domestic sphere, Mill asked his readers to consider how a woman’s preferences are like a tree, one part of which has been cultivated in the nurturing warmth of a hothouse, the other part of which has been left to wilt outside in the ice and snow. One should not be surprised when the half that has been nurtured flourishes while the other half withers. And yet, Mill writes, “men, with that inability to recognise their own work which distinguishes the un-analytic mind, indolently believe that the tree grows of itself the way they have made it grow” (1870, p.39).

The role of social structures in shaping women’s preferences and choices has been a continuous source of debate into the 21st century. Are women truly free actors, operating under a ‘qualitatively new scenario’ of unconstrained choice, as Hakim argues? Or are they still stuck in the hothouse – or not – making choices and forming preferences in response to the social structures that surround them? The statistics generally bear out at least one part of Hakim’s thesis: most women in Australia do return to work part-time after becoming mothers (ABS 2006). And both women and men in Australia strongly favour the idea of maternal care for young children (Kelley et al. 2010). For mothers who return to work, the preference for maternal care necessitates part-time work for at least a period of time. The reasons why this should be
so, however, remain contested. In the two decades since Hakim first advanced her
theory, multiple studies have been published challenging the notion that women’s
workplace participation patterns can be explained by preferences alone. Mill’s
metaphor of the hothouse tree runs silently through many of these studies, which argue
that women’s workplace behaviours cannot be seen as proof of their innate preferences,
since those behaviours are shaped by the gendered nature of our homes, schools, and
workplaces.

Critics of Hakim argue that her research oversimplifies or obscures the complex
social forces that constrain women’s choices and shape their behaviours. In a
conceptual retort to Hakim’s (1995) essay, ‘Five feminist myths about women’s
employment’, Bruegel (1996) argues that Hakim treats women’s attitudes about work
and family as fixed and innate, and makes no attempt to explore where those attitudes
come from. It is one thing for women to make choices about whether (and in what
capacity) to return to work, but in Hakim’s work “the interesting question of how these
are formed and how these develop, is left unasked” (1996, p.175). Others concede
Hakim’s point that women cannot be treated as a homogeneous group with uniform
wants and goals, but fault her for failing to investigate why women fall into different
categories in the first place (Crompton & Harris 1998). Using qualitative methods to
explore the work-life choices of 150 female professionals in medicine and banking from
five countries3, Crompton and Harris found that while preferences may influence
women’s choices with respect to work, they alone do not determine those choices.
Rather, women tend to construct their work-life biographies according to the
opportunities and constraints that have historically been open to them (1998, p.119).

3 Britain, Norway, France, Russia, and the Czech Republic.
For example, women are poorly represented in some professions because they have been actively and purposefully excluded (Allen 1994, cited in Crompton & Harris 1998, p.129). The process of exclusion can also be more subtle. Research has found that some women choose not to seek senior-level corporate positions because they understand that the unwritten rules of recruitment and promotion systematically favour men over women (Doughney 2007; Leahy & Doughney 2006); others recognise that the prevailing culture of long working hours is hostile to family life and adjust their career expectations accordingly (Liff & Ward 2001; Smithson et al. 2004).

Researchers have also taken issue with Hakim’s assertion that women’s preferences for work or family life are rigid and static, and remain unchanged over the life course (Morehead 2005). Using longitudinal data from the British Office of National Statistics for 1971, 1981, and 1991 to examine women’s employment transitions over their childrearing years, Blackwell (2001) argues that women are far more occupationally mobile – shifting from full-time to part-time work and vice versa – than preference theory would suggest, and that it is not possible to determine from employment patterns alone whether some women choose lower-paid, lower-status, part-time work as a permanent work-life strategy, or become segregated into those positions involuntarily (2001, p.160). Fagan (2001) extends this argument by highlighting the disparity between what women want and what is actually available to them. Using data from the 1995 British Household Panel Survey and the 1989 Equal Opportunity Commission’s Hours of Work Survey, Fagan concludes that women with children are overrepresented in short-hours part-time jobs because of a lack of alternative options: most jobs require either long full-time hours or short part-time
hours, but most women state they would actually prefer something in between, such as shorter full-time hours or longer part-time hours (2001, p.260).

Others question Hakim’s typology itself. McRae (2003) tracked the employment patterns and sex-role preferences of hundreds of first-time mothers in Britain over an 11 year period. She found that many women do not fit neatly into Hakim’s static preference categories but reside on a continuum instead. Although work-centred women and home-centred women exist in small numbers, McRae argues that the boundaries for adaptive women are blurred. There is no clear demarcation, for example, between work-centred women and adaptive women who work a lot of part-time hours, or home-centred women and adaptive women who work only occasionally. And contrary to Hakim’s assertion that lifestyle preferences cut across all socio-economic classes, the women in McRae’s study were hampered by their external circumstances (income, age, education, and access to housing and social services) when it came to their ability to act on their preferences (2003, p.333). Thus, women who may have started out with similar lifestyle preferences often demonstrated very different behaviours in the labour market depending on circumstances largely outside their control.

Lastly, critics take issue with Hakim’s use of women’s working hours as a proxy for their emotional or subjective commitment to paid work (Ginn et al. 1996; Fagan 2001). Hakim argues that women who choose part-time work have a lesser, or qualitatively different orientation toward their careers than women who choose full-time work. That women are disproportionately represented in part-time work is not a reflection of discrimination or disadvantage, it is a reflection of women’s weaker ‘commitment’ – also sometimes called subjective attachment, or orientation – to work
when compared to the majority of men or work-centred women who opt for full-time employment (Hakim 1995, p.434, 2000, 2006).

Fagan (2001) tests this assertion by using a different measure of employment commitment: results from a survey asking men and women whether they would continue working if they could afford not to. Fagan’s findings confirm that women in part-time work do express lower average levels of employment commitment than men or women who work full-time (2001, p.249), but the degree of employment commitment varies considerably with the quality of their jobs. Notably, women working part-time in professional jobs have higher levels of non-financial employment commitment (66 percent) than males or females working full-time at lower occupational levels, such as in clerical, craft, service, or manual jobs. These findings reinforce earlier critiques by Ginn et al. (1996) that women’s tendency to choose part-time work does not, by itself, reflect a weaker commitment to work; rather the relatively poor quality of most part-time jobs may actually weaken women’s commitment to work.

2.2.3 Preference theory in the Australian context

The earliest critiques of preference theory emerged mainly from the United Kingdom and continental Europe, but in the past decade several studies have also challenged the applicability of Hakim’s thesis in Australia, highlighting some outcomes that are unique to the country. For example, using data from the Australian Longitudinal Study of Women’s Health, Johnstone and Lee (2009) categorized 6,929 women between the ages of 25 and 30 into Hakim’s three preference groups based on their responses to questions relating to their aspirations for work and family. The researchers found that preference affiliations are strongly associated with socioeconomic factors, education,
and geographical distribution in particular. Rural women, for instance, are more likely than urban women to fall into the home-centred category, but it is not clear to what extent this result is an expression of personal preferences or the limited range of career opportunities available in Australia’s remote and regional areas. In addition, Johnstone and Lee’s study found a significant degree of variability among the largest group – the adaptive women. Like McRae (2003) – who criticised this category as a broad, essentially meaningless catch-all for the number of women who were not overtly home- or work-centred – Johnstone and Lee conclude that Hakim’s categorisation of adaptive women may be too narrow to capture the full range of work-life aspirations held by Australian women. Rather than resigning themselves to flexible but unrewarding work, it would appear that a significant number of young Australian women aspire to a successful career and an involved home life (Johnstone & Lee 2009, p.218).

Similarly, Wicks et al. (2002) found a significant disconnect between what Australian women say they want, and what they get in their attempts to negotiate work and family. In their mixed-methods study of Australian women, the researchers found that young, childless women who aspired to be mothers also held ambitious career goals that went beyond being secondary earners in the family. Drawing on survey data from 1,400 women and interviews with 57, Wicks et al. found that 60 percent of women aged 18-23 said they hoped to be working full-time at the age of 35 (2002, Section 3.1). These stated preferences are markedly different from women’s actual employment patterns during their peak childrearing years. In the quarter century from 1979 to 2004, the proportion of women aged 35-44 working full-time in Australia rose just 5 percent (ABS 2006). In contrast, the proportion of women working part-time was 40 percent for women aged 30-34; 49 percent for women aged 35-39; and 48 percent for women aged
40-44 (Baxter & Gray 2008). How does one reconcile young women’s stated preferences for full-time work with the fact that women’s labour force participation rates in the childbearing and childrearing years is concentrated overwhelmingly in part-time work? Wicks et al. conclude that women want different types of work at different times in their lives, but once they shorten their working hours, it appears “much harder to get out of part-time work than it is to get into it” (2002, Section 8.4). This finding is supported by international research by Blackwell (2001), Jacobs (1999), and Walsh (1999).

Other studies have found that some working mothers stay in full-time employment against their personal preferences for fear of being segregated into poor quality part-time jobs. In a mixed-methods study of 275 mothers working in Australian tertiary education, McDonald et al. (2006) found that some women remain in full-time employment due to the lack of promotion potential in part-time work, or from fear of being expected to assume full-time responsibilities on part-time schedules, for part-time pay. These findings suggest that preferences alone do not determine women’s employment decisions; they are also influenced by external forces such as the nature and design of their jobs, the quality of their jobs, the work-family policies of their employers, and the extent of shared labour with partners at home (McDonald, Bradley & Guthrie 2006, p.488).

Institutional constraints – such as the start and finish times of schools, which frequently do not align with the standard 38 hour full-time work week stipulated by Australia’s National Employment Standards⁴, and child care centres that do not accommodate non-standard working hours (e.g. long full-time hours, or shift work) –

also appear to influence women’s workforce patterns. Analysing large-scale, nationally representative longitudinal data from the Australian National University’s Negotiating the Life Course survey, van Wanrooy (2005) asserts that the actual and preferred working hours of women with children in Australia align very closely with the operating hours of schools and child care centres, suggesting that women are adapting their labour force behaviours to external constraints rather than acting on innate preferences for either home or work. In other words, women may be selecting to work part-time not in fulfilment of their preferences for family over work, but because of the misalignment between the eight hour work day and the six hour school day. Hakim’s theory, van Wanrooy argues, “does not give much weight to the impact of institutional influences on women’s preferences, but this appears to be a major factor” (2005, p.160) in the employment decisions of Australian women.

2.2.4 ‘Satisificing’: the good enough choice

Preference theory shares many key assumptions with rational choice theory, one of the core theories of modern neoclassical economics. Behind these theories lies the idea that individuals are rational choosers (Neumann et al. 1944), their preferences are self-interested and well-ordered. People proceed through life as though their choices were laid out before them on a smorgasbord, with the potential costs and benefits of each option readily apparent. When making choices, individuals compare their options as if on a sliding scale, with the best, most optimal choice at one end, and the worst, least optimal choice at the other. The aim is to maximise one’s preferences, profits, or expected utility (Friedman 1953, pp.13–15). Even if the individual does not explicitly make this calculation, or is unaware that she is seeking to maximise her returns, rational choice theory holds that she will nonetheless act as if she were. Hakim, like
other proponents of rational choice theory, is unconcerned with human motivations, or why we want what we want. Rationalists limit their investigations to our desires as they exist in specific social or economic environments; they are unconcerned with the complex social, psychological, and cultural factors that influence our desires in the first place. The only way to understand a woman’s preferences, in this view, is to examine her actual choices, as there is no choice-independent way to understand her attitude towards alternatives (Sen 1977, p.323). Neoclassical economic modelling has long relied on this notion of a fundamentally rational ‘economic man’ or *homo economicus*, the supposedly gender-neutral, but wholly unencumbered – or “care-less” in the words of Pocock (2003, p.1) – individual actor who evaluates all available options before making his choice, and is fundamentally concerned with his own self-interest (Persky 1995).

But how accurate is this picture in real life? The economist and social scientist Herbert Simon (c. 1916-2001) has argued that economic man’s presumed goal of utility maximisation is nearly always impossible in real life due to the limitations of information, time, and the cognitive powers of the human decision maker. That is, people are usually called upon to make decisions in a short period of time, with imperfect information, and their brains, unlike computers, are only capable of assessing a limited number of possibilities. Simon proposed the concept of *bounded rationality* to explain how human beings make the best choices they can, given the limited time, information, and circumstances surrounding the choice. In seeking to understand how decisions are made, he argues, it is impossible to consider preferences independent of constraints:

Only in the simplest cases will the system behaviour be predictable from an optimisation argument. Almost always, structure and limits to adaptation will, to some degree, ‘show through’, and hence will have to be taken into account. The outer environment and the inner structure are the
two blades of the scissors, and both blades must be present and operative for a satisfactory dissection of what is going on (Simon 1991, p.17).

Rather than seeking pure maximisation, individuals make decisions that satisfy and suffice for the purpose at hand, or trade off a degree of satisfaction against a threshold of acceptability (Schwartz et al. 2002, p.1178). Simon called this behaviour ‘satisficing’ (Brown 2004, p.1241). A handful of recent studies (Chafetz & Hagan 1996; Crompton & Harris 1998; Corby & Stanworth 2009) argue that ‘satisficing’ is a better conceptual model for understanding women’s behaviour in the labour market than the notion that women’s choices are either purely rational or purely constrained. Examining the work-life choices of women in the medical and banking professions, Crompton and Harris assert that many women attempt to strike a balance between career success and satisfaction in their personal lives without sacrificing too much of one over the other (1998, p.126). These women, who Crompton and Harris identified as ‘satisficers’, accounted for the largest group in their sample (63 out of 150 interviews). These findings advance work by Chafetz and Hagan (1996) who contend that women often seek success in their professional and domestic spheres, without maximising either. In their theoretical examination of women’s historical tertiary education rates, labour force participation rates, and demographic changes across 21 industrialised countries, Chafetz and Hagan assert that women’s employment patterns reflect their attempts to ‘satisfice’ two socially valued goal sets: the social and economic rewards of paid work, and the social and psychological rewards of personal relationships (1996, p.213). However, Corby and Stanworth (2009) argue that there are more externally-imposed constraints on women’s success in the workplace than at home. As a result, women are more likely to compromise their involvement in the labour market by limiting their working hours or exiting the workforce (temporarily or permanently) and dedicate
themselves to personal relationships, such as their children, spouses, or extended families (Corby & Stanworth 2009, p.166).

‘Satisficing’ may occur in the type of work selected by women as well. Using data from 50 qualitative interviews with female part-time workers in low-paid, low-status jobs in the United Kingdom, Walters (2005) found that many women with competing responsibilities trade-off intrinsically satisfying work for the extrinsic benefit of convenience. The majority of women in their study saw their jobs as ‘OK for now’; a way of managing their domestic and financial responsibilities given the limited options available to them in the labour market (2005, p.212). Contrary to Hakim’s assertion that women choose these positions strategically, as a result of their inherent preferences for lifestyle over career, Corby and Stanworth’s (2009) study, which was based on interviews with 80 working women in full- and part-time roles across all skill levels in south-eastern Britain, found that most women do not make strategic employment choices, but tend to “fall into” jobs that become available to them and fit their circumstances at the time (2009, p.163).

Rational choice, the authors contend, is not a good explanation for the roles women ended up taking. Instead, they argue, women make “conscious compromises” on the basis of incomplete information, and trade-off convenience, flexibility, and other desirable attributes by accepting “less than optimal aspects of work” (2009, p.175). Most women in the labour market are not “independent actors positively choosing a lifestyle”, Corby and Stanworth argue, they are choosing jobs that are “good enough in the circumstances” (2009, p.175). ‘Satisficing’ offers a better conceptual model for understanding women’s workplace participation, they assert, because it allows for the
presence of both choice and constraint in the decision-making process; it “recognises women’s agency, yet recognises that such agency is circumscribed” (2009, p.175).

2.2.5 Adaptive preferences and the structural lag

Other scholars assert that, within families, decisions about how to organize work and home life are not made by women alone, and the continued focus on rational choice obscures the influence of these social and cultural factors. These authors assert that modern dual income families are caught in an institutional or structural lag (Riley & Riley Jr. 1994; Moen & Yu 2000; Pocock 2003), in which modern workplaces have failed to catch up to the radically new circumstances in which people now live. The culture and structure of Australian workplaces are still widely predicated on the idea that households are comprised of a breadwinner (usually male) and a caregiver (usually female), even as dual-income households have outstripped single-income households as the new norm (Pocock 2003). In 1983, almost half of all couple households with dependent children lived off a single income; by 2010, this proportion had fallen to 30 percent. The most common arrangement in couple households with dependent children now has one partner (usually the male) working full-time whilst the other partner (usually female) works part-time; this model accounted for 36 percent of all couple households with dependent children in 2010 (Hayes et al. 2011). Fewer and fewer households have the support of a single family member whose sole job it is to provide care or manage household chores, yet many professional jobs are still designed for the ‘ideal worker’ (J. C. Williams 2000) who is either unencumbered with such responsibilities, or can rely on someone else to look after them. Similarly, many community services, such as schools, medical offices, and children’s activities assume that a parent or another caregiver is usually available during business hours (Moen &
Yu 2000, p.292). Whether implicitly or explicitly, our social structures and workplaces continue to assume this gendered distribution of responsibilities in spite of the radical changes in the way most families now live (Pocock 2003, 2006; Crittenden 2001; Folbre 2001; Hochschild 1989). As Joan C. Williams has recently observed: “We still have a workplace designed for the workforce of the 1960s” (2010, p.1).

Rather than being a matter of individual choice on the part of the family member traditionally expected to bear the burden of domestic responsibilities – usually the woman – scholars argue that work-life strategies are usually family-level negotiations that adjust and shift over time. In the case of dual earner households, balance is not simply a matter of adjudicating two competing roles (employee versus spouse, or spouse versus parent) but is a three-way tussle between “his job, her job, and their family goals and responsibilities” (Moen & Yu 2000, p.293). Rejecting female-orientated identifiers such as Hakim’s preferences types, Moen and Yu advocate a conceptual typology that frames individuals’ work and family orientations at the household level. Under this view, the overwhelming prevalence of neo-traditional households in Australia, characterised by a husband in full-time work and a wife in part-time work, is not the result of women’s free choice so much as an ‘adaptive strategy’ developed in response to the failure of institutions and workplaces to accommodate changes in household structures, a phenomenon sometimes known as the ‘structural lag’ (Moen & Yu 2000, p.311).

In a workplace environment still predicated on the breadwinner-homemaker model, individuals’ employment choices frequently come pre-packaged in ways that perpetuate gendered outcomes. For example, they argue, most workers cannot choose to work in part-time careers that have significant promotion potential; they must opt
for jobs with lower status. Most workers in full-time, professional roles cannot choose to refuse their long hours without risking negative consequences. And most workers cannot move in and out of part-time work to accommodate their domestic responsibilities on a week-by-week, or month-by-month basis. In response, households adopt different tactics to cope with these limitations (Moen & Yu 2000, p.316). Pocock has drawn similar conclusions in her Australia-based research, arguing that families are caught in a “work/life collision” that forces women and men into imperfect choices owing to the failure of workplaces and “unrenovated” institutions (2003, p.1) to catch up to the rapid and dramatic changes in Australian household structures.

The cultural norms governing economic production and social reproduction, workplaces and homes, create a zero sum proposition for women seeking to negotiate family life (Blair-Loy 2003; Folbre 2001; Gerson 2009, 1986; Hochschild 1989; Stone 2007; Williams, JC 2000; Williams 2010). Drawing on qualitative interviews with 56 senior-professional, career-committed women and 25 family-committed women, Blair-Loy (2003) argues that women, who are socialised to assume the lion’s share of household (or reproductive) work, are forced to choose between two competing devotions: the devotion to work, on the one hand, or the devotion to family on the other. Both devotion schemas are “emotionally and normatively charged” (2003, p.179), and reinforced by social relationships (i.e. with one’s employer, co-workers, spouse, or children) and cultural ideologies (i.e. the devoted worker versus the devoted mother). But scholars argue that these devotions are mutually exclusive: to succeed in one domain is to risk defeat in the other (Gerson 1986; Blair-Loy 2003), or at the very least, will require substantial “cognitive acrobatics” (Johnston & Swanson 2007) to balance the
dissonant values prized by each sphere. Women’s employment patterns cannot be considered independent of this broader cultural dynamic.

These findings have been reinforced by Stone (2007) in her qualitative study examining the motivations of 54 women who ‘opted out’ of professional careers to stay at home with their children. She argues that women are faced with a ‘choice gap’. They are torn between the extreme demands of long-hours working culture on the one hand, and the intensification of motherhood on the other (Hays 1996). The women in Stone’s study had been overwhelmingly career-centred for most of their adult lives; they had achieved significant professional success before ‘opting out’ of the workforce. They cited mainly frustrations over working conditions, not family considerations, as paramount deciding factors. The long hours and inflexibility of many professions combined with the gendered expectations of parenting, Stone argues, creates a “de facto motherhood bar” (2007, p.101). Being a female is no longer, by itself, a bar to professional success, but being a mother – or a caregiver, more generally – is (Folbre 2001).

In addition to the notion of a cultural ‘motherhood bar’ (Stone 2007), other studies have confirmed that women with children face tangible ‘motherhood penalties’ in terms of hiring and salaries as well (Budig, Misra & Boeckmann 2012; Budig & England 2001; Correll, Benard & Paik 2007; Livermore, Rodgers & Siminski 2011). The earnings of mothers have been found to lag behind the earnings of men and childless women across several industrialised countries (Budig, Misra & Boeckmann 2012), even after controlling for differences in professional experience, education, family structure, working hours, and differential selection into the labour market. In Australia, Livermore et al. (2011) have found that women face wage penalties of 5 percent with the birth of one child, and 9 percent for two or more children. These, they argue, may reflect
women’s reduced productivity in the workplace, if caring for children leaves them with less energy to devote to work, or may arise from discrimination, if employers simply perceive mothers to be less ‘committed’ or productive than other workers. Laboratory and audit studies from Hungary (Glass & Fodor 2011) and the United States (Correll, Benard & Paik 2007) lend support for the discrimination hypothesis. These studies have found that women who signal their parental status in job applications (e.g. by listing volunteer activities at a school), are penalised by prospective employers on a host of measures, including interview call-backs, perceived competence, and recommended starting salaries. Male job applicants who signalled their parental status, on the other hand, faced no such penalties.

The studies reviewed in this section highlight the ways in which the structure of non-work institutions (such as schools and child care centres), the cultural norms of organisations, and lower earnings potential reinforce a traditional, gender-segregated division of labour. The gendered assumptions embedded in these institutions, the notion that employees are unencumbered with domestic responsibilities and can therefore devote long hours to work, and that caregivers are unencumbered by the need to earn a living and can therefore attend to their children’s myriad daytime activities, act to “push men and women into appropriate caregiving and work roles in a series of events over their lives” (Blair-Loy 2003, p.74). The key argument running through all of these studies is that it is impossible to understand the complexity of women’s employment moves without understanding how gendered cultural norms and institutional structures shape and constrain human agency.

Returning to Hakim, a single, essential complaint runs through all of the critiques of preference theory: voluntary action cannot be conflated with genuine, unconstrained
choice. In their theoretical critique of Hakim’s preference theory, Leahy and Doughney (2006) argue for the phenomenon of ‘adaptive preferences’: women adjust their desires in response to workplaces and social structures that perpetuate gendered inequalities. Recalling Aesop’s fable of the fox and the grapes (Nussbaum 2000, p. 136-139 cited in Leahy & Doughney 2006, pp.45–46), the authors argue that – like Mill’s glasshouse tree – individuals adjust their desires to their environments. In the fable, the fox is tempted by a delicious bunch of grapes hanging from a vine. Unable to reach them, he decides they must be sour and walks away. A woman may choose to play the game according to the established rules, or she may decide the rules are stacked against her and choose not to play. Women’s locations in the labour-market alone cannot tell us very much.

Ultimately, a true assessment of any voluntary action depends on the context in which the choice was made. Using statistical distributions of women’s employment as evidence of their fixed preferences risks perpetuating a ‘vicious cycle’ of gendered inequalities (Leahy & Doughney 2006, p.40). Social policies or workplace regulations based on notions of rational choice reinforce the status quo, rather than attending to the structural constraints that limit and shape those choices in the first place.

This section has sought to outline the major debates in women’s employment choices, and establish a framework for the current research, which accepts that women exercise agency in their employment choices, but that these choices are bounded by broader social, cultural, economic, and institutional factors that cannot be ignored.
2.3 Women and entrepreneurship

The previous section highlighted the debates in relation to choice and constraints in the sociological literature around women, work, and family. This section examines the literature on entrepreneurial motivation, particularly as it pertains to women with caregiving responsibilities. Most of the studies examined thus far have tended to focus on women’s career choices in the context of organisational employment patterns, particularly women’s concentration in part-time or casual employment. Self-employment, or entrepreneurship, is largely subsumed – or completely ignored – in this conversation. Although much of Hakim’s early work on British labour market patterns focused on self-employment (Hakim 1989, 1988), self-employed women are not assigned a special category within preference theory. Instead, Hakim argues that self-employed women – like female employees – fall into the preference categories according to their working hours. That is, a work-centred woman who is willing to devote herself full-time and permanently to her enterprise can be seen as more ‘committed’ to her business, and more likely to succeed, than the ‘dilettante’ part-timer (2006, p. 282). Thus, the full-time female entrepreneur can be seen as work-centred, while the self-employed woman who works part-time can be seen as adaptive; their working hours demonstrate their lifestyle orientations and commitment to their careers.

The influence of choice and constraint in the self-employment decision is rarely examined in the literature on women and work. Is the decision to become self-employed a reflection of preference, constraint, or both? How does maternal self-employment fit into the literature on women’s employment patterns? This section examines the major literature around entrepreneurial motivation and gender. It begins with a discussion
about the terminology used in this research, before moving to an overview of push-pull theory, the predominant research framework for understanding entrepreneurial motivation. This section will contend that many of the measures traditionally applied to the study of entrepreneurial motivation are gendered, and furthers the argument for an approach to entrepreneurship studies which treats ‘family’ and ‘business’ as interconnected, each influenced by the other, thereby recognising the influence of an individual’s family or household situation on the entrepreneurial process (Aldrich & Cliff 2003).

2.3.1 Who is an entrepreneur?

This study is concerned with understanding the factors that motivate some women to become self-employed after motherhood by drawing together two bodies of research: the sociological literature around women, work, and family, and the literature on entrepreneurial motivation. The first hurdle in understanding what motivates some people to entrepreneurship, however, lies in establishing what constitutes an entrepreneur. Despite the rapid growth in entrepreneurship studies over the past 50 years, there remains no academic consensus around the question. The remainder of this section highlights the aspects of this debate that relate specifically to gender, and argues for the use of more expansive (and inclusive) measures of entrepreneurship.

Scholars in the fields of history, management, economics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology have been attempting to delineate and refine the concept of entrepreneurship since it was first introduced by Richard Cantillon (c. 1680-1734) in his *Essai sur la nature du commerce en général* (2011), but to date there remains little agreement around the question: who is an entrepreneur? Contemporary economic theory has tended to regard entrepreneurship as a vital component of economic growth.
In this view, which was first advanced by Schumpeter (1934), the entrepreneur is commonly depicted as an innovator, opportunist, profit-seeker, risk-taker, decision-maker, owner, manager, employer, contractor, arbitrageur, and overall driver of economic progress (Hebert & Link 1989, p.41; Bennett & Dann 2000). This high-growth, high-ambition depiction of entrepreneurship has tended to reinforce the vision of the ‘entrepreneur’ as an heroic or mythical figure (e.g. Richard Branson of Virgin, Bill Gates of Microsoft, or Steve Jobs of Apple); a master of his own destiny capable of bringing innovation and economic growth to the masses (Down & Warren 2008; Gupta et al. 2009).

Critics argue that this growth-oriented, profit-seeking, risk-taking definition of the entrepreneur is based on a stereotypical profile of a few outlier individuals – typically males – who do not represent the vast majority of business owners or operators. Casson (1982), for example, asserts that the entrepreneur label should apply to any owner or manager who exhibits judgement in decision making. Cunningham and Lischeron (1991) argue instead for multiple definitions of entrepreneurship – from the ‘mythical heroes’ to managers – recognising the heterogeneity of entrepreneurial profiles and activities. Rindova et al. (2009) argue that entrepreneurship should be seen as not just as an economic activity, but as an emancipatory act, encompassing a wide range of “change-oriented activities and projects” (2009, p.477). In their view, entrepreneurship can be defined as any effort – whether large or small – to “bring about new economic, social, institutional, and cultural environments, through the actions of an individual or group of individuals” (2009, p.477). This approach opens the potential for scholarly examinations of actors and activities not traditionally considered as entrepreneurial, including “explorers, scientists, artists, freelancers, and social
cooperatives, as well as the many small-scale initiatives through which individuals and groups seek to change their worlds” (2009, p.489). The aim of this definition of entrepreneurship, they argue, is not to “champion a heroic view of the entrepreneur who breaks away from authority and dislodges structures of power” but to recognise that entrepreneurial activity is “all around us” (2009, p.490).

Alongside these debates about the nature of entrepreneurship, scholarly interest in female entrepreneurship has also grown along with women’s increased participation in business and the labour market. In the absence of a common definition of entrepreneurship, scholars of women’s entrepreneurship have applied varying criteria to establish their research samples. One of the earliest studies of women’s entrepreneurship, for example, defined an entrepreneur as an innovative individual who creates a business from non-existence (Schwartz 1976, p.47), highlighting the importance of founder status. Other definitions posit that it is not sufficient to start and grow a new enterprise; the entrepreneur must also own and control the business (Cromie & Hayes 1988), or at least play an active role in the management of a business in which he or she holds a majority stake (Moore 2005; Mattis 2004; McClelland et al. 2005). A few scholars have also continued to argue for the importance of profit-motive and growth-orientation in distinguishing ‘entrepreneurs’ from ‘managers’ or ‘small business operators’, regardless of the individual’s role in starting or running the business (Bennett & Dann 2000). These studies generally argue that ‘entrepreneurs’ have a qualitatively different motivation or orientation profile than ‘small business operators’ and ‘managers’ and should be treated as separate entities.

Feminist scholars argue that the traditional growth-centred, innovation and profit-driven view of entrepreneurship contains a specific male bias that implicitly
obscures the business activities of many women (Moore 1990; Stevenson 1990; Hughes 2005, 2006), or finds women to be deficient or lacking when compared to their male counterparts (Ahl 2002, 2006; Ahl & Marlow 2012; Marlow & McAdam 2013). Various gender comparative studies of female entrepreneurs have concluded, for example, that women are less inclined to build business empires than men, and are not driven to the same extent by profit, growth, or status (Hisrich & Brush 1986, 1984; Lee-Gosselin & Grisé 1990; Cliff 1998; Shane, Kolvereid & Westhead 1991).

Critics of these gender-comparative studies argue they implicitly set female business owners up against masculine norms, without recognising the social and cultural structures that produced those outcomes in the first place (Ahl 2002, 2006; Ahl & Marlow 2012; Marlow & McAdam 2013; Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio 2004a, 2004b; Gupta et al. 2009). In Australia, for example, female-owned businesses are more likely to be small, unincorporated, service-based, self-funded enterprises with few or no employees, sometimes conducted around family needs (ABS 2013b, 2008), a situation that can be seen as resulting from women’s occupational segregation and subjugated position in the Australian economy, rather than reflecting a qualitative difference between male and female orientations to business or entrepreneurship.

Unlike sex, which is innate and biological, gender is not what people are but what people do, and how they ascribe particular meanings to ‘male’ and ‘female’ (Butler 1988, 1990; Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio 2004a, 2004b). Gender is not a fixed set of attributes, identity, or “locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylised repetition of acts” (Butler 1988, p.519, italics in the original). Women’s entrepreneurship must be understood, therefore, through the ‘lens of gender’ (Baines & Wheelock 2000, p.45;
Gupta et al. 2009), acknowledging the potential effects of socially constructed and learned ideas about gender and entrepreneurship (e.g. how does one define entrepreneurship) on the types of businesses women develop, and how they develop and run those businesses.

Regarding the lack of consensus around what constitutes entrepreneurship, or who can be counted as an entrepreneur, it has become standard practice for researchers to preface their analyses with caveats – like this one – about the difficulty in drawing clear distinctions between entrepreneurs, small business operators, managers, contractors, and various other types of self-employed individuals (see, for example, Bennett & Dann 2000; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Hughes 2005; Kirkwood 2009). The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), the world’s largest study of entrepreneurship, which has been collecting data from more than 85 countries since 1999, has attempted to resolve these definitional debates by employing one of the most inclusive definitions of entrepreneurship, which is: “any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organisation, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business” (Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros 2011, p.9). This holistic definition, which encompasses both high- and low-ambition enterprises, accepts the importance of seeing entrepreneurial activities in context. That is, the person (usually a woman) who runs a subsistence-level market stall in Nicaragua or starts a small service-based consultancy in Australia has as much right to be counted as an ‘entrepreneur’ as the person (usually a man) who founds and builds a multi-billion dollar technology company in California.

This study explicitly adopts the GEM’s more expansive (and inclusive) definition of entrepreneurship over more traditional growth- and profit-orientated definitions,
which are based on stereotypical profiles (Gupta et al. 2009) of outlier individuals (Casson 1982) and are therefore deeply gendered (Ahl 2002, 2006). This study recognises the heterogeneity of entrepreneurial activity (Hughes et al. 2012), the need for research approaches that acknowledge the breadth of enterprising activities (Cunningham & Lischeron 1991), and the importance of studying entrepreneurship within a wider social context (Marlow & McAdam 2013). Thus, consistent with other gender-based entrepreneurship research (Weaven, Isaac & Herington 2007; Hughes 2005; Mallon & Cohen 2001), this study uses the terms ‘self-employed’, ‘venture creator’, ‘business owner’, ‘business operator’, ‘owner-operator’, and ‘entrepreneur’ interchangeably throughout.

2.3.2 Push-pull theory

The question of what makes a person decide to start a business has occupied entrepreneurship scholars for the better part of four decades. One of the main theory developments in this area has been to classify motivational influences into push factors and pull factors (Gilad & Levine 1986; Cooper & Dunkelberg 1986; Orhan & Scott 2001; Orhan 2005; McClelland et al. 2005; Segal, Borgia & Schoenfeld 2005; Hughes 2005; Schjoedt & Shaver 2007; Kirkwood 2009; Kariv 2011, 2012; Dawson & Henley 2012).

*Push factors* are generally classified as external forces that drive individuals to start their own enterprises out of necessity, rather than by choice. These influences are generally negative and may include: unemployment, redundancy, job dissatisfaction, or the perceived insecurity of organisational employment brought about by industrial restructuring or wider changes in the economic climate (Gilad & Levine 1986; Cooper & Dunkelberg 1986; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Dawson & Henley 2012). The GEM refers to
these entrepreneurs as *necessity* entrepreneurs (Reynolds et al. 2002), driven to self-employment by a lack of alternatives in the labour market.

*Pull factors*, in contrast, lure individuals to entrepreneurship by their intrinsic merits, such as the opportunity to see a venture succeed or to achieve financial success. Other commonly cited pull factors include: the desire for independence, autonomy, or control (Gilad & Levine 1986; Orhan & Scott 2001; Dawson & Henley 2012); wanting to ‘be one’s own boss’ (Carter & Cannon 1992); the need for self-realisation or self-determination (Buttner & Moore 1997; Orhan & Scott 2001); the desire for wealth, social status, or power (Carter & Cannon 1992); or the feeling of creating a social benefit or good (Solymossy 1997). The GEM classifies these venture creators as *opportunity* entrepreneurs (Reynolds et al. 2002), lured to self-employment by a desire to capitalise on personal or professional goals, or both.

As with preference theory, the notion of human agency underpins the push-pull, necessity-opportunity dichotomy, placing the decision to start a new venture on what Dawson and Henley have called a “spectrum of willingness” (2012, p.698). At one end, the pull factor entrepreneurs can be seen to be *positively* motivated by market opportunities or a desire for independence, autonomy, control, self-realisation, or wealth. On the other end, push factor entrepreneurship can be regarded as a *negative* arrangement chosen reluctantly by those with no other choices in the labour market. Scholars argue that when entrepreneurial activity is motivated by opportunity, it is generally seen in a positive light, offering the individual valuable opportunities for material gain, upward mobility, and personal or professional growth. If the transition to self-employment is borne of necessity, due to a lack of alternative choices, it can be seen as a less positive arrangement (Kariv 2011; Dawson & Henley 2012). Australian
research has also suggested that when ventures are created from opportunity, rather than necessity, entrepreneurs experience less fear of failure (Allen et al. 2007 cited in Nel, Martiz & Thongprovati 2010).

Scholars have found evidence for both push factor entrepreneurship and pull factor entrepreneurship. In large-scale quantitative studies, however, pull factor motives have generally been found to be more prevalent among nascent entrepreneurs than push factors (Gilad & Levine 1986; Segal, Borgia & Schoenfeld 2005; Schjoedt & Shaver 2007; Dawson & Henley 2012), particularly in developed economies (Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros 2011; Amoros & Bosma 2013). Researchers generally agree that entrepreneurs rarely start new ventures on the basis of pure necessity or opportunity alone, but are influenced by a confluence of push and pull motivations that can be ambiguous and difficult to untangle (Orhan 2005; Hughes 2005). To this extent, it has also proved difficult to determine whether the motives for business start-up have any bearing on the financial success of the enterprise. Although it has been suggested that businesses founded on push factor motivations are less financially successful than businesses borne of opportunity motives (Amit & Muller 1995; Buttner & Moore 1997), subsequent empirical studies have shown no link between start-up motivations and business performance (Solymossy 1997; Dahlqvist & Davidsson 2000; Kariv 2011). Despite these ambiguities, push-pull theory remains the predominant theoretical framework for understanding and classifying entrepreneurial motivation (Orhan 2005; Kirkwood 2009; Dawson & Henley 2012).

2.3.3 A gendered view of push-pull theory

There has been considerable interest over the years in understanding the extent to which women and men are motivated by the same factors in starting new businesses.
Most large-scale quantitative studies carried out in developed economies have tended to find that men and women share the same primary, pull factor motivations, namely: a desire for independence, challenge, and self-determination (Cromie 1987; Shane, Kolvereid & Westhead 1991; Shane, Locke & Collins 2003; Fischer, Reuber & Dyke 1993; Bennett & Dann 2000; Carter et al. 2003; Kirkwood 2009; Dawson & Henley 2012). But when these studies have delved into secondary motivations, or used qualitative methods to explore individual interpretations of the variables, they have tended to find more differences than similarities between males and females. Early qualitative research from Northern Ireland found that women were more likely to be motivated by a desire to balance work and family commitments, or to escape a hostile or unsatisfying work environment, while men were more likely to be motivated by financial goals (Cromie 1987). In their comparative, cross-national quantitative study of start-up motivations among business owners in Britain, New Zealand, and Norway, Shane et al. (1991) found that the desire for power, status, and prestige was greater among male entrepreneurs, whereas female entrepreneurs were more likely to be driven by a desire for achievement or recognition. Although financial gain has been found to be a prime motivator among both men and women (Cromie 1987; Kirkwood 2009), studies of growth-orientation among business owners suggest that female entrepreneurs are more likely to contain the growth of their businesses deliberately (Cliff 1998) or to sacrifice some financial gains in favour of other goals, such as improving customer relationships or achieving a better balance between work and family (Souter and Still 2000, p. 9-10, cited by Newton, Wood & Gottschalk 2003).

Other scholars have questioned the commonly accepted definitions of ‘push’ and ‘pull’, arguing that they compress and oversimplify the dynamics of entrepreneurial
choice, particularly when examined through the lens of gender (Carter & Cannon 1992, pp.21–24; Buttner & Moore 1997; Hughes 2003, 2006). Take, for example, the most frequently cited motivating factor: independence (and related themes, such as autonomy and control). Can female entrepreneurs with children be seen to have been pulled into self-employment by the intrinsic attractiveness of independence, autonomy, or control? Or should they be seen as pushed into self-employment by the relative lack of independence, autonomy, and control in organisational workplaces, as well as the social expectations on them at home? For women with children, is having autonomy over one’s time a workplace attribute that is ‘nice to have’ (an opportunity) or is it a ‘must have’ (a necessity)?

Recent research has begun to examine this question in different ways. In a qualitative gender comparative study of 47 male and 28 female entrepreneurs in New Zealand, Kirkwood (2009) found that women and men were similarly motivated by a combination of push and pull factors, chiefly independence, financial gain, and job dissatisfaction. But among respondents with children, women were three times more likely than men to say that children were a major part of their start-up rationale (75 percent of women compared to 22 percent of men). In describing their motivations around their children, the women in the study spoke of wanting the flexibility to accommodate their children’s daily schedules, whereas the men spoke of the importance of their financial contribution and breadwinner role in the family (2009, p.356).

Large-scale quantitative research has revealed similarly gendered differences in the push-pull framework. Examining the self-reported motives of more than 11,000 self-employed individuals in the United Kingdom, Dawson and Henley (2012) affirmed that
independence is the most prevalent motivating factor for both men and women, accounting for 30 percent of all responses. But among the men and women who cited more than one motivator, gendered differences began to emerge. Male respondents with multiple motives were much more likely to pair “independence” with another traditional pull factor, such as “saw the demand/market” or “opportunity arose”. Women, in contrast, were four times more likely to combine “independence” with “family commitments”, suggesting that for many women, the need for autonomy is an operational necessity in managing the demands of their socialised roles.

Similarly, Hughes (2006) has found that women are four times more likely than men to start businesses for work and family reasons. Using findings from large-scale survey data in Canada, her research found that 53 percent of female entrepreneurs have classic ‘opportunity’ motives, compared to 72 percent of males, and that women and men are ‘forced’ into entrepreneurship by redundancy or unemployment in roughly equal proportions (around 22 percent). But one-quarter of female business owners said they started their business for “work and family” reasons, compared to just 7 percent of males.

The gendered differences highlight the ambiguity in the traditional definitions of push and pull. For an individual with caregiving responsibilities, is independence a desirable workplace attribute (pull), is it a necessary one (push), or can it be both? Likewise, should financial motives be classified as the desire to capitalise on a lucrative opportunity (pull) or a symptom of financial distress (push)? Dawson and Henley cite the latter example to illustrate that although quantitative surveys that attempt to measure push and pull variables have tended to conclude that opportunity motivations are more prevalent than necessity motivations, “the zone of uncertainty around the
scale of ‘push’ or ‘necessity’ entrepreneurship could be quite large” (2012, p.714). With respect to women’s entrepreneurship in particular, Hughes (2003, 2006) has argued that survey results may significantly underestimate the prevalence or importance of push factors in the decision process. This is not only because of the ambiguity of the categories, but also because respondents may be more likely to ascribe their decisions to positive motivations (e.g. independence, challenge, financial gain) over negative ones (e.g. lack of flexibility, poor work environment, family obligations, uncertain economic environment), even if those negative factors set the context for the choice. Both Hughes (2006, 2003) and Dawson and Henley (2012) cite the need for further qualitative research to fully understand the breadth and depth of the self-employment decision. This is discussed in depth in Chapter Three, which explains how this study uses qualitative tools, specifically narrative analysis, to explore the complexity of the push-pull dynamic in women’s self-employment choices.

These and other studies suggest the need for a gender-sensitive application of push-pull theory. Various scholars have argued, either directly or indirectly, for expanding the theory to include gender-specific push factors, such as: inflexible employment, lack of promotion possibilities or ‘glass ceiling’ constraints, and lack of independence or autonomy (Goffee & Scase 1985; Cromie & Hayes 1988; Carter & Cannon 1992; Buttner & Moore 1997; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Orhan 2005). Others argue that push-pull theory should be expanded to include the role of children – or household dynamics – in women's self-employment motives, sometimes referred to as the ‘motherhood’ motive (de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007; Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; Aldrich & Cliff 2003; Kirkwood 2009; Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013b). This concept of the motherhood motive will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.
2.3.4  Entrepreneurial motivations in women

This section provides an overview of the major studies in women’s entrepreneurship over the past four decades, followed by an analysis of recent scholarship examining entrepreneurial motivation in women, particularly in the transition from organisational employment to self-employment. In addition to the gender comparative studies outlined above, there has been substantial research examining women's entrepreneurial motivations in isolation. The ability to draw clear comparison across these studies is hampered, however, by the definitional and methodological issues described above, both in terms of the parameters used to select the sample (‘who is an entrepreneur’), the measures used to define the women’s motives, and the national contexts in which the studies are set. As discussed in the previous section, most large-scale, quantitative, surveys of women’s entrepreneurship have tended to conclude that male and female entrepreneurs are more likely to be pulled into entrepreneurship by its intrinsic benefits than pushed into it by external circumstances, although recent research has begun to highlight the gendered ambiguities in these results. Qualitative and mixed-methods studies, in contrast, have tended to conclude that the motivations of female entrepreneurs are more complex, influenced by a host of gendered push and pull factors.

The study of women’s business ownership in the 1980s was dominated by attempts to isolate and classify women into entrepreneurial types, based on their behaviours and motivations. For instance, Goffee and Scase (1985) analysed interviews with 54 female business owners in south eastern England according to the women’s attachment (high or low) to conventional male-female gender roles, defined as the women’s willingness to submit to male domination, on the one hand, and their
attachment to entrepreneurial ideals on the other. Drawing on the matrix of responses, Goffee and Scase identified four types of female entrepreneur: conventional businesswomen, who set up businesses to contribute to the family income while still performing their traditional domestic obligations; innovative entrepreneurs, profit-centred, growth-orientated businesswomen (generally unmarried with no children) who set up their enterprises after quitting organisational employment in frustration over a lack of opportunities for advancement; radical proprietors, who set up their businesses to advance feminist ideals, or the interests of women; and domestic traders, primarily well-educated, middle class women who established their businesses not necessarily for profit or growth but to “discard their roles as wives and mothers” (1985, p.118) and achieve a measure of self-fulfilment, if only in a limited sphere of their lives.

Cromie and Hayes (1988) developed a similar profile, drawing on interviews with 34 aspiring entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom. Their schema, which is primarily arranged around the women’s maternal status, identified three distinct types: innovators, dualists, and returners. As with the innovative type identified by Goffee and Scase, Cromie and Hayes’ innovators are ambitious, profit-centred, and growth-orientated. They are mainly childless, and have rejected conventional gender roles to pursue independence, wealth, and achievement. Dualists, in contrast, run businesses designed to facilitate the combination of paid work and domestic responsibilities, with child care being a major factor in the start-up decision. Like the innovators, dualists are often well-educated and also seek independence and achievement, but are not driven by a desire to advance their careers (1988, p.102). Rather, self-employment offers dualists a way to stay connected to paid work, but in a less demanding way. Finally, returners are older women who choose self-employment after an extended period out of the
workforce – usually for childrearing purposes. Cromie and Hayes suggest that returners start their businesses in response to dissatisfaction with the jobs available to them upon re-entering the workforce after an extended break, and are more motivated by reasons of personal satisfaction than economic necessity.

Although these typologies were among the first research efforts to recognise that female entrepreneurs are not homogenous, they have been criticised on a number of fronts. Carter and Cannon (1992), for example, argue that fixed typologies do not reflect the fact that the experiences, behaviours, and motivations of entrepreneurs may change over time, and may also vary according to social class, ethnic origin, marital status, and other cultural or structural factors outside their control (Allen & Truman 1993). A woman who starts her business as a domestic trader may become an innovator, either by virtue of her success or by economic necessity (in the case of an unexpected divorce or widowhood, for example). Alternately, a woman who starts a ‘conventional’ business supplementing the household income while fulfilling her duties as a wife and mother may do so not necessarily because she is voluntarily attached to conventional gender roles, but because her husband or extended family demands it. In response, Carter and Cannon proposed a flexible typology identifying six entrepreneurial profiles – accidentalists, aspirants, young achievers, achievers, re-entrants, and traditionalists – based on women’s entrepreneurial behaviour at start-up and their stage in the life-cycle. They propose that it is possible to move from one type to another at any time depending on the growth or contraction of the business, personal needs or any number of extrinsic factors.

The argument that entrepreneurial motivations are shaped by social and domestic structures as individuals move through the life course has also recently been
advanced by Jayawarna et al. (2013). In their study of working-class participants in an enterprise start-up program in the United Kingdom, the authors found that female entrepreneurs with young children are more likely to be motivated by the need for flexibility to accommodate family responsibilities (particularly child care) rather than ‘materialism’, ‘status’, or ‘achievement’ (2013, p.45). This form of entrepreneurship, which the authors call *convenience entrepreneurship*, is a stopgap strategy exercised by mothers wanting to earn some immediate income in addition to undertaking their gendered reproductive roles while sustaining a foothold in paid work until a period in their lives when their time is less constrained (2013, p.47). Compared to other types of entrepreneurs, Jayawarna et al. (2013) argue that *convenience entrepreneurs* are less committed to entrepreneurship over the longer term because their businesses are constructed around their temporary need for flexible working arrangements due to their specific situation in the life course. Their long-term aspirations, the authors argue, are for employment careers.

Since the 1990s, management and sociological research into women’s entrepreneurship has tended to focus on the factors that motivate women – particularly high-achieving senior professionals – to leave organisational employment in favour of self-employment (Lee-Gosselin & Grisé 1990; Buttner & Moore 1997; Moore & Buttner 1997; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Orhan & Scott 2001; Mattis 2004; Hughes 2003; Patterson & Mavin 2009; Knörr 2011; Murtagh, Lopes & Lyons 2011; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013). Although these studies do not always explicitly frame their conclusions in terms of push and pull motivators, these studies support the argument that, for most women, the decision to become self-employed is a complex process that involves the interplay of traditional pull factors (e.g. the desire for independence or challenge), and gendered
push factors (e.g. the need for flexibility associated with caregiving responsibilities, or ‘glass ceiling’ and other organisational constraints).

Drawing from survey data and focus group interviews with 129 female entrepreneurs in the United States, for example, Moore and Buttner (1997) conclude that women’s reasons for leaving organisational employment are grounded in both positive personal aspirations and negative organisational factors. Their study identifies two main types of female entrepreneur: intentional entrepreneurs, who deliberately set out to run their own businesses, pulled by the intrinsic appeal of entrepreneurship and a longstanding desire to run their own businesses; and corporate climbers, ambitious women who start their own businesses in response to frustration and disappointment with organisational careers. The desire for autonomy, independence, and control are powerful elements in the self-employment narratives of both groups, regardless of whether the decision was a deliberate and positive choice, or a reactive and negative one (1997, pp.167–168).

Using structured interviews with a nationally representative sample of 650 business women in the United States, Mattis (2004) argues that more than half of the women who leave organisations (51 percent) are motivated by a need for flexibility, revolving primarily around childcare (30 percent) but also including participation in community events, personal health concerns, elder care, or other family obligations. Other motivations for leaving private sector careers include: dissatisfaction with work environment (29 percent), glass ceiling constraints (28 percent), and lack of challenging work (22 percent). Only 5 percent left due to redundancy, and 3 percent reported leaving due to sexual harassment.
Unsatisfactory working environments were also found to be a major push factor in Mallon and Cohen’s qualitative study of middle- and senior-level executives who left organisational employment to become self-employed in the United Kingdom. Of the 41 women they interviewed, all but six women were driven to self-employment by dissatisfaction and disillusionment with organisational careers, including: a lack of challenge or promotional potential in the job, inflexible schedules, bureaucratic inefficiencies, a misalignment of values, or personal or family-related conflicts. Against this backdrop, self-employment frequently emerges as an attractive alternative, offering the potential for autonomy, challenge, meaning, and control. Although the majority of the women in their study quit organisational employment voluntarily, Mallon and Cohen argue that a deliberate decision to exit organisational careers does not necessarily signal a positive one. The women in their study saw organisations as a source of restriction, frustration, and disappointment; self-employment, in contrast, offered the potential for liberation, autonomy, balance, and personal authenticity. That is: “self-employment was whatever organisational employment was not” (2001, p.227).

These findings are largely echoed by Patterson and Mavin (2009), Knörr (2011), and McKie et al. (2013) in small scale case study and phenomenological research examining why some senior female professionals transition into self-employment. Knörr, for example, argues that women who leave senior management positions to become self-employed are driven out of organisations by three core experiences: first, the encountering of professional ‘road blocks’ to their advancement; second, a profound shift in their priorities and needs, particularly in relation to children and family; and third, a desire to find meaning, fulfilment, and balance in their lives (2011, p.109). Similarly, McKie et al. conclude that there are three key variables in women’s decision to
opt into self-employment: first, control over space and time to avoid the "gendered hassles (or hurdles)" inherent in organisational employment (2013, p.194); second, flexibility to allow family needs to be addressed without having to rely on the help of others; and third, autonomy to self-determine key aspects of their careers.

Mainiero and Sullivan (2006, 2005) and Sullivan et al. (2007) have proposed the Kaleidoscope Career Theory to explain why some women opt out of organisational employment and into self-employment. They argue that women's employment decisions over the life course are shaped by three, ever-present, ever-shifting desires: challenge, balance, and authenticity. Using large-scale survey data from the United States, the authors propose that women's early careers are dominated by a desire for challenge, but the desire for balance and authenticity predominate in women's mid- and late-career stages, around their childbearing and childrearing years. These findings are supported by Cabrera's (2007) study testing the Kaleidoscope Career Theory using surveys of 497 professional women who had 'opted out' of organisational employment in the United States.

Applying the Kaleidoscope Career Theory to self-employment, using quantitative survey data and in-depth interviews with self-employed men and women in the United States, Sullivan et al. (2007) assert that while self-employed women may, in fact, be 'revolting' against the frustrations and constraints encountered in organisational employment, many are drawn to entrepreneurship by a desire for greater authenticity (i.e. personal fulfilment, meaning, and satisfaction) in their professional lives. Rather than pursuing the linear path of the traditional organisational career, characterised by a sequence of hierarchical moves within an organisation or industry, Sullivan et al. argue that women's entrepreneurship should not be seen solely as a rejection of gendered
organisations, but also as a dynamic expression of personal values and life choices (2007, p.12).

2.3.5 Women’s business motivations in Australia

Most of the research on women’s entrepreneurship has emerged from the United States and the United Kingdom. In Australia, by contrast, research on women’s entrepreneurship has been scant. Only a handful of studies have been conducted in recent decades, despite the fact the share of Australian businesses owned and operated by women has grown steadily in that time (Bennett & Dann 2000; Newton, Wood & Gottschalk 2003; Still, Soutar & Walker 2005; Still & Walker 2006; Walker & Still 2003; Still & Timms 2000; Weaven, Isaac & Herington 2007; Walker & Webster 2006). The authors of these studies, which are mainly quantitative in nature, have tended to argue for the predominance of pull factors, although these findings are problematic.

Bennett and Dann (2000), in their quantitative survey of 197 female entrepreneurs, found that only a small proportion of women entrepreneurs in Australia (7.7 percent) were motivated by family obligations. The majority, 51.6 percent, cited internal motivations, such as the desire for fulfilment, independence, the need for satisfaction, or quality of life. Around one-third (33.9 percent) cited business goals, such as financial gain or the desire to capitalise on an opportunity, followed by 19.2 percent who cited personal obligations such as helping a husband. However, the proportion of women in Bennett and Dann’s study with dependent children is not stated, making it difficult to assess the applicability of their findings to the present study. Furthermore, their study employs an explicitly profit- and growth-orientated definition of entrepreneurship (2000, p.76), which raises the possibility that many women who started their businesses for family or lifestyle reasons may have been excluded from
their sample. Bennett and Dann are unapologetic in ascribing a profit-motive to their definition of ‘entrepreneurship’, which they explicitly distinguish from ‘small business ownership’. But this distinction undermines their conclusion that female entrepreneurs in Australia are less likely to be motivated by family or domestic concerns than has been found in the literature elsewhere, where broader definitions of entrepreneurship have been applied.

For example, Weaven et al. (2007) suggest that women’s motives for becoming self-employed may vary considerably depending on the type of business they start. Their qualitative study compared the start-up motivations of women running small businesses (n=12) and women running franchises (n=14) in Australia. Small business women – the very women excluded from Bennett and Dann’s (2000) study – were more likely to cite the desire for operational freedom, dissatisfaction with salaried employment, and lifestyle factors as prime motivators. Franchisees, in contrast, were motivated by more traditional business goals: expected financial gain, proven business concept, and initial business training. The authors conclude that self-employed women are not a homogeneous group; franchisees appear to be pulled by opportunity, whereas small business operators appear more likely to be pushed into self-employment by gender-related factors. Although the study did not specify the proportion of women with dependent children, the small business operators were around 32 years of age on average, about 10 years younger than the franchisees, and more likely to be in their peak child-raising years. This suggests that position in the life-cycle may play a role in women’s self-employment motivations, although this is not specifically addressed by the authors.
Among rural women, Newton et al. (2003) have found that small business operators in Australia are more likely to report being lured into self-employment by its intrinsic benefits rather than pushed by necessity. In their quantitative study of 359 women business operators in rural western Victoria, 43.5 percent of whom had dependent children, they found that women were mainly drawn to small business ownership by: a sense of achievement (48 percent); creating employment for self (35 percent); a sense of being in control of one’s destiny (32 percent); a better lifestyle (28 percent); extra income for family (28 percent); and desire to be one’s own boss (17 percent). As with previous quantitative studies, the reliance on survey data obscures the ambiguity in many of the categories. The authors themselves concede, for example, that the motivator ‘creating employment for self’ has both push- and pull- implications for women in rural areas, but when combined with the other responses the overall impression is one of positive agency. Newton et al. conclude that their model provides support for the presence of both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators among rural women (2003, p.16).

In their effort to create a benchmark profile of the female entrepreneur in Australia, Still and Walker (2006) examined the motivations of 517 women operating small and medium sized businesses in Australia. The respondents – 67 percent of whom had children – cited ‘independence and flexibility’ as their main motivator (71 percent). This was followed by: the opportunity to be creative (47 percent); feeling tired of working for someone else (41 percent); to earn a living (39 percent); to make a profit (29 percent); to make more money (28 percent); to meet a service or need in my area (25 percent); to be home with children or dependent adults (24 percent); other (17 percent); or could not find a job (6 percent). Still and Walker argue that very few
Australian women are pushed into self-employment, because only 10 percent of respondents in their survey were registered as unemployed or could not find a job prior to start-up, compared to 46 percent who were in full-time employment and 18 percent who were in part-time employment prior to start-up (2006, p.298). This conclusion relies on a very narrow definition of ‘push factors’ (i.e. arising from job loss or unemployment), and ignores the fact that many of the motivators cited by the women in their study (e.g. ‘independence and flexibility’, ‘feeling tired of working for someone else’, ‘to be home with children or dependent adults’) suggest the possibility of gendered constraints, which have not been explored in the Still and Walker (2006) data.

The Australian research to date on women’s self-employment has tended to suffer from two main problems: first, the use of narrow or exclusive definitions of entrepreneurship that potentially exclude significant numbers of female business owners, in particular women running low-growth businesses around their families (Bennett & Dann 2000); and second, the use of traditional push-and pull factor measurements that obscure the gendered nature of women’s start-up motivations (Bennett & Dann 2000; Newton, Wood & Gottschalk 2003; Still & Walker 2006). Several of these studies also treat women as a homogeneous group with respect to their caregiver status, drawing broad conclusions about the extent to which family-related factors influence women’s entrepreneurial motivations without specifying what proportion of their respondents had dependent children (Bennett & Dann 2000; Newton, Wood & Gottschalk 2003; Weaven, Isaac & Herington 2007) or whether the women’s self-described motivations varied by maternal status (Still & Walker 2006).
2.3.6 ‘Mumpreneurship’

Although the studies highlighted in this review are notable for their attempt to elucidate the variety and complexity of women’s experiences in making the transition to self-employment, they are also notable in their tendency to treat women as a homogeneous group with respect to family obligations. It has been argued that motherhood, rather than gender, is the disruptive force in women’s careers (Cromie & Hayes 1988; Crittenden 2001; Aldrich & Cliff 2003; Stone 2007; Budig, Misra & Boeckmann 2012). Yet most studies of women’s entrepreneurship have tended to treat women as a monolithic group in this respect, painting the problems experienced by women in organisational employment or the motivations for becoming self-employed with a broad brush. With few exceptions, these studies fail to distinguish between the challenges faced by women with dependent children – or other caregiving responsibilities, such as elder care – and those without. It is plausible, for example, that family responsibilities play a greater role in the start-up motivations of women with dependent children than for women without, but this is difficult to conclude because most studies of women’s entrepreneurship fail to delineate their results by parental status. Critics of this homogeneous treatment of female entrepreneurship have called for a more nuanced approach to entrepreneurship studies (Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007) that recognises the influence of the household or family structures in which the entrepreneurial process is ‘embedded’ (Aldrich & Cliff 2003). This concept is discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

A small but growing body of literature out of the United Kingdom has begun to examine entrepreneurship specifically in the context of motherhood. This new research focuses on a particular subset of female entrepreneurs: mothers who set up their
businesses to combine paid work with caring for young children. Scholars who study these so-called ‘mumpreneurs’ (or ‘mompreneurs’ in Canada and the United States) argue that these women are worthy of separate consideration for the manner in which they attempt to blur the boundaries between work and home, and resolve the competing devotions (Blair-Loy 2003) of worker and mother (Nel, Martiz & Thongprovati 2010; Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013).

The exact origin of the term ‘mumpreneur’ is unknown, though it has been credited to a number of different sources (Nel, Martiz & Thongprovati 2010; Ekinsmyth 2013b). In 2011, the Collins English Dictionary added the word ‘mumpreneur’ to its online dictionary (Cameron 2011), defining it as: ‘a woman who combines running a business enterprise with looking after children’. The concept has gained traction in the popular media since the mid-2000s, with media outlets usually advancing so-called ‘mumpreneurship’ as the answer to the now-clichéd notion of ’having it all’ (see, for example, Slaughter 2012): a successful career and an active, involved motherhood (Duberley & Carrigan 2013). Articles on ‘mumpreneurship’ have appeared in general media publications from the United States (Laporte 2011) to the United Kingdom (Methven 2014; Slater 2008), Ireland (McCabe 2013; Quinlan 2014), Singapore (Seow 2104), and Australia (Allan 2013; Bryant 2013a, 2013b). The term has also been widely adopted by practitioners themselves. In-person and online ‘mumpreneur’ networking groups have emerged across the English-speaking world. The AusMumpreneur Network, which explicitly promises its members that they can “have it all: a successful business, a happy family, and a flexible lifestyle”\(^5\), has more than 12,000 followers on its

Facebook page\textsuperscript{6} and holds regular ‘mumpreneur’ conferences around Australia that attract dozens of aspiring and established self-employed mothers. Similar groups have emerged in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, and Singapore, suggesting the emergence of a group of entrepreneurs who see themselves as having a unique identity and goals.

It is worth mentioning, however, that although the ‘mumpreneur’ label has been enthusiastically embraced by some, others firmly reject it (Bryant 2013b; Morrison 2013). Those who oppose the label generally argue that it reinforces gendered stereotypes about female entrepreneurship and risks ‘ghettoising’ women’s businesses, rendering them precarious, insignificant, or ‘other’ (Ekinsmyth 2013b, p.1242). Such critics might ask, for example, why female entrepreneurs with children should be called ‘mumpreneurs’, when male business owners with children are simply ‘entrepreneurs’, not ‘dadpreneurs’. Conversely, women who proclaim the ‘mumpreneur’ label argue that it allows them to own their identities as both mothers and entrepreneurs, rendering them equally important in public view (Coleman 2014). To these women, ‘mumpreneurship’ represents a new way of doing business, one that does not require them to subjugate their maternal identity to their worker identity, or vice versa, because both identities are seamlessly integrated in the one sphere. Use of the term, they argue, holds transformative power. To be a ‘mumpreneur’ is to refuse to partition one’s identity as an entrepreneur from one’s identity as a mother. Indeed, bringing two (gendered) concepts of ‘mother’ and ‘entrepreneur’ together challenges the very idea about what it means to be an entrepreneur and who can claim the title (Ekinsmyth 2013a, p.542).

This study will not attempt to resolve these discursive debates. This research accepts that ‘mumpreneurship’ – both as a phrase and a phenomenon – contains both emancipatory and marginalising elements (Duberley & Carrigan 2013). But it has been argued that the naming of the phenomenon is nonetheless significant because the label makes it possible to distinguish and analyse this particular sub-set of entrepreneurs (Ekinsmyth 2013b, p.1230) in the context of the wider entrepreneurship literature. By examining the gendered processes that have produced the ‘mumpreneur’ phenomenon specifically, it is possible to elucidate the gendered processes of entrepreneurship more generally (Ekinsmyth 2013a, p.526).

Ekinsmyth (2011, 2013a, 2013b) applies a geographical lens to ‘mumpreneurship’, defining the concept primarily as a spatial phenomenon; an attempt to resolve the space-time conflicts that many women experience in blending paid work with family obligations. A ‘mumpreneur’, she argues, is someone who finds and exploits new business opportunities within a single sphere, to “integrate the demands of motherhood and business ownership” (2011, p.105). In other words, ‘mumpreneurship’ enables women to participate in paid work while still being available to conduct the daily school run, make dinner, do the laundry, and myriad other tasks associated with women’s socially-ordained reproductive role. To embody the business practice of the ‘mumpreneur’, however, it is not sufficient for a woman to merely combine entrepreneurship with her motherhood role; she must have deliberately configured her business around that role (Ekinsmyth 2013b, p.1231). She notes that the business practice of ‘mumpreneurship’ can also include fathers who configure their businesses to accommodate their caregiving roles.
Ekinsmyth's conception of 'mumpreneurship' goes beyond the physical constraints of space and time, however. She also highlights the material, institutional, and moral components of 'place' as key motivators for 'mumpreneurs'. Women, she argues, are motivated not just by the logistical constraints of juggling paid work and motherhood, but also by the social and cultural norms that dictate how that work should be carried out and by whom (Jarvis 2005 cited in Ekinsmyth 2013a, pp.539–540). By building their businesses around their families, 'mumpreneurs' thus “recast the boundaries between productive and reproductive work” (Ekinsmyth 2011, p.104) and embrace, rather than contest, their gendered caregiver role.

Duberley and Carrigan (2013) extend this argument in their recent research on ‘mumpreneurs’. Drawing on qualitative interviews with 20 entrepreneurial mothers in Britain, they contend that women who adopt the business practice of ‘mumpreneurship’ are deeply, but often unconsciously, influenced by the discourse of “intensive mothering” (Hays 1996), a time-consuming and labour-intensive ideology of childrearing that has taken hold amongst a particular white, middle-class demographic in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia (Liss et al. 2013; Hattery 2001).

First proposed by Hays (1996) in her book, *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*, the “ideology of intensive mothering” is a pattern of beliefs and values concerning the ‘appropriate’ manner of child-rearing. This ideology holds that childhood is sacred, priceless, and must be protected; that the foundation for proper childhood development is unbounded love and affection; and that it is specifically a *mother’s* role to be the central caregiver in a child’s life. The current ethos of parenting demands a “child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour-intensive, and
financially expensive” (Hays 1996, p.8), approach to motherhood, which presents a direct contradiction to the ethos of the workplace and interferes with women’s ability to participate in the workforce by creating a zero sum proposition between being a ‘good mother’, on the one hand, and being a ‘good worker’ on the other. Under this ideology, which, it has been argued, has been internalised to varying degrees by all types of mothers, regardless of employment type (Johnston & Swanson 2006, 2007; Liss et al. 2013), there is virtually no limit to the degree of effort or sacrifice required to live up to the standards of ‘good motherhood’. This leaves most mothers falling short, particularly when combined with the set of implicit or explicit ‘devotions’ of the workplace (Blair-Loy 2003; Johnston & Swanson 2007).

Embracing ‘mumpreneurship’ in contrast – either as a business practice (i.e. configuring their businesses around their children), as an explicit identity, or both – allows self-employed mothers to construct an identity that reflects both their commitment to paid work and their commitment to intensive mothering (Duberley & Carrigan 2013, p.634). The desire to be both a ‘devoted mother’ and a ‘devoted worker’ (Blair-Loy 2003) are central themes in the career narratives of ‘mumpreneurs’ (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013). ‘Mumpreneurship’ allows working mothers to pursue these competing ideals simultaneously, at least in theory.

Whether ‘mumpreneurship’ bridges or merely widens the chasm between the ‘good’ mother and the ‘good’ worker is contested. On the one hand, the ‘liberation perspective’ presents female entrepreneurship as an ideal alternative to organisational employment (Duberley & Carrigan 2013). The independence, flexibility, and control associated with self-employment are powerful, emancipatory enticements, allowing women the freedom to pursue opportunities for fulfilment, challenge, meaning, or
financial reward not easily found in part-time employment. For mothers specifically, self-employment offers the promise of staying connected to paid work without having to prioritise one’s preference for work over motherhood, or vice versa (Carter & Cannon 1992, p.155; Jurik 1998 cited in Duberley & Carrigan 2013, p.631).

On the flip side, self-employment can also be seen as a form of ‘marginalisation’: an unstable, precarious, often low-paying form of work that lacks the advantages of employment benefits such as sick leave, holiday pay, superannuation, and overall job security (Young and Richards 1992 cited in Duberley & Carrigan 2013, p.631). This view holds that entrepreneurship marginalises women with children by removing them from organisational employment – the centre of economic power – while simultaneously reinforcing their roles as primary caregivers (Gurstein 1992 cited in Duberley & Carrigan 2013). This latter conclusion has been reinforced in Australian time-use research, which has found that mothers use self-employment as a strategy for combining paid work with childcare activities, mainly through home-based employment, while fathers prioritise their time toward paid work regardless of their employment type (Craig & Powell 2010). Thus, rather than being the answer to women’s “second-shift” (Hochschild 1989), self-employment merely reinforces it.

Ekinsmyth (2013a, 2013b) argues that ‘mumpreneurship’ should be understood as an ‘adaptive preference’ (Leahy & Doughney 2006), the exercise of agency within a wider context of social constraint. For women wanting to integrate paid work with the demands of intensive mothering, ‘mumpreneurship’ is an adaptive response to the physical constraints of space and time and the socio-cultural constraints of ‘good mother’ ideology (Hays 1996). Ekinsmyth argues that it is neither possible nor helpful to separate structure from agency in the understanding ‘mumpreneurship’. The
question whether these women should be contesting the ideology of intensive mothering rather than embracing it is beside the point. If the women themselves perceive ‘good motherhood’ as an important goal, or derive satisfaction from its exercise, “it is patronising to suggest that mothers think they have a choice, but don’t really; or that they don’t really have a true preference for the motherhood role even though they think they do” (Ekinsmyth 2013a, p.541). Nevertheless, she writes, while ‘mumpreneurship’ may enable women to do business differently, it also enables gender “not to be done differently” (Ekinsmyth 2013a, p.541).

Researchers who have studied the phenomenon generally agree that self-employed mothers fully appreciate the trade-offs they have made in the shift to self-employment, and recognise both the liberating and marginalising aspects of their choice (Ekinsmyth 2013a; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013). On the whole, these women mostly regard their self-employment as a form of liberation while also realising that their circumstances are less than ideal (Ekinsmyth 2013a, p.541). In their case studies of women who opted into self-employment after motherhood in Finland and Scotland, McKie et al. (2013) reinforce this finding with their conclusion that women generally perceive the decision as a positive one, given the wider context of their career and family lives at that stage of life. The decision to opt in to self-employment does not necessarily challenge the gendered nature of organisations or home. Rather, by opting out of organisational employment, and opting in to self-employment, women with children seek “to create a careerscape which recognises the bedrock of gender relations, and allows for the cultivation of more pleasing scenery through which they can traverse the next stage of their career” (2013, p.194).
Both Ekinsmyth and Duberley and Carrigan are careful to specify that their findings do not apply to all women entrepreneurs, nor do ‘mumpreneurs’ represent all mothers who attempt to combine business ownership with raising children. However, accepting Ekinsmyth’s definition of a ‘mumpreneur’ as a woman who configures her business around her children, it is possible that some self-employed mothers fit the definition of ‘mumpreneur’ even if they actively reject the label. By focusing on a particular subset of female entrepreneurs, however, these studies begin to present a more nuanced portrait of women’s entrepreneurship that acknowledges the influence of household, or family, structures on the dynamics of venture creation.

The research examining the entrepreneurial motivations of self-employed mothers has been predominantly qualitative (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013), but has generally not sought to delineate the self-employment decision in terms of push or pull factors. These studies have been more interested in the discourses women apply to their experiences and identities as ‘mumpreneurs’ rather than looking at the career histories that led to the decision to become ‘mumpreneurs’.

It is not entirely clear from these studies whether women who configure their self-employment around their families do so in reaction to the constraints of organisational employment, or as a proactive choice. In other words, is ‘mumpreneurship’ a push response resulting from constraint, or a pull response arising from preference? When placed in a context of a wider career narrative, do the need and desire for control, flexibility, and autonomy outlined by McKie et al. (2013) act as push factors or pull factors, or both? Do women who configure their businesses around their
families opt into this so-called ‘mumpreneurship’ by choice, or is it a circumstance forced on them by necessity or constraint?

2.4 An embedded approach to entrepreneurship research

In her much-cited critiques of gender-comparative entrepreneurship literature, Ahl (2002, 2006; Ahl & Marlow 2012) argues that much of the research on women’s entrepreneurship up until the mid-2000s contained an excessive focus on the financial growth or viability of female-owned businesses compared to male-owned businesses. These studies, Ahl argues, are frequently grounded in justifications about women’s businesses being significant but unrecognised drivers of economic growth, and thus worthy of independent research. Such economic rationales for the study of female entrepreneurship necessarily privileges some research questions over others (Hughes et al. 2012), and hold female business owners up to comparison against unspoken ‘male’ norms (Ahl & Marlow 2012; Marlow & McAdam 2013). Gender-comparative studies which find, for example, that women business-owners are not as focused on profits or growth as their male counterparts (Cliff 1998), or as status-driven (Shane, Kolvereid & Westhead 1991), or as likely to seek or obtain external financing (Bosse & Taylor 2012), inadvertently reinforce women’s secondary position, both as entrepreneurs and in society at large. Ahl writes:

A majority of the texts position women as a problem in this equation. Either they do not do it right, or they are not right. What is ‘right’ can be seen as male gendered: pursuing growth, size, profit and selecting high tech or manufacturing industries where this is more likely to be achieved than in service and retail. Women who do the opposite are said to have made a ‘life-style choice’. (2002, p.144)
As a result, Ahl and others (see, for example Hughes et al. 2012) have begun to call for a broadening of the questions asked in the entrepreneurship literature, and a shifting of the epistemological position away from objectivist-rationalist analyses exploring the statistical differences between male and female business owners towards a more constructionist stance that does not view gender as a static explanatory variable, or "something that is given" (Ahl 2002, see Abstract), but seeks to explore "how gender is accomplished in different contexts" (Ahl 2006, p.612, italics in original). This includes widening the scope of entrepreneurship research to include not just the characteristics, behaviours, motivations, and performance of individual entrepreneurs, but which also examines the institutions, policies, and cultural factors – the “contextual and historical variables” (Ahl 2006, p.605; see also Hughes et al. 2012, p.431) – that shape those individual practices.

Recognising the influence of these social norms, Bird and Brush (2002) argue for the need to apply a more gender-sensitive lens to entrepreneurship research that recognises the potential influence of an individual’s “internalised and enacted gender perspective” (2002, p.43) on the process of venture creation. In other words, men and women are likely to approach their entrepreneurial activities in gendered ways based on the values, intentions, and social capital (e.g. prior experiences and social networks) they carry with them. The traditional focus on ‘masculine’ or ‘heroic’ entrepreneurial behaviours, however, has largely obscured entrepreneurial behaviours that may be more aptly classified as ‘feminine’. Rather holding female entrepreneurs up for comparison against their male counterparts, as a large body of early research into female entrepreneurship sought to do (Carter, Anderson & Shaw 2001), more research
is required to understand the heterogeneity of motivations, behaviours, and practices among female entrepreneurs.

Similarly, other scholars have begun to call for a more contextual approach to entrepreneurship studies, looking at entrepreneurial motivations and behaviours in the context of the family or household structures from which they emerge (de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007; Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; Aldrich & Cliff 2003; Rouse & Kitching 2006; Rouse, Treanor & Fleck 2013). Traditionally, entrepreneurship studies have tended to regard family and business as wholly separate entities, one without bearing on the other. For example, Brush et al. (2009) contend that entrepreneurship studies have focused too narrowly on the 3Ms – money, markets, and management – neglecting the potential influences of two additional Ms – ‘motherhood’ and the ‘macro/meso’ environment (also mentioned by de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007) on entrepreneurial decision-making.

To develop a more complete understanding of women’s entrepreneurship, these scholars argue, one must consider the influence of household or family factors (i.e. ‘motherhood’), which generally affect women more than men, as well as organisational contexts, policy measures, and socio-cultural norms (i.e. ‘the macro/meso environment’) that may influence whether a mother decides to remain in organisational employment, start her own business, or stay at home to look after her children, either permanently or temporarily. Motherhood stands at the centre of this framework, symbolising the importance of “the role and position of a woman in the family” and the centrality of gender in the study of women’s entrepreneurship (Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009, pp.12–13). Aldrich and Cliff (2003) encourage researchers to incorporate the influence of family or household (e.g. ‘motherhood’) structures into conceptual
models of venture creation, and propose a new *family embeddedness approach* to
entrepreneurship studies which recognises the interdependence of the two spheres:

Connecting the ‘unnaturally separated’ social institutions of family and
business will pave the way for a more holistic – and more realistic –
insights into the fascinating process by which new business opportunities
and new business ventures emerge (Aldrich & Cliff 2003, p.574).

Examining women’s self-employment motivations in the context of their
household or family situations, therefore, allows for traditional entrepreneurial theory
(e.g. push-pull theory) to draw insights from the sociological literature on women, work,
and family. This allows for the incorporation of social influences (such as the influence
of gender, ‘motherhood’, and the ‘meso/macro environment’) into conceptual models of
entrepreneurship that have disproportionately focused on money, markets, and
management (Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009).

2.5 Conclusion

The position of women in the labour market has been the focus of considerable
scholarly debate over the past four decades. At the same time, a significant body of
literature has emerged examining the worldwide growth in female business ownership,
both in the developed and developing worlds (Kelley et al. 2013), and the factors that
influence venture creation among women. Work and family issues are often treated as
central elements in the entrepreneurial process for women, but researchers have
tended to treat women as a homogeneous group in this regard, conflating womanhood
with motherhood. This, combined with the use of restrictive definitions of
entrepreneurship and blunt quantitative measurement tools, has produced little
consensus about the extent to which family dynamics influence women's entrepreneurship, or vice versa.

Self-employment is still a minority position among female workers in Australia, accounting for around 9 percent of the female workforce (ABS 2013a, 2015). But women with young children are up to three times more likely to be self-employed than the general female workforce (Baxter 2013a; Baxter et al. 2007). This study aims to explore the factors that drive maternal self-employment in Australia. Drawing from the mainly sociological research on women, work, and family, and the predominant push-pull theory of entrepreneurial motivation, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

*RQ1.* What motivates some women to become self-employed after motherhood?

To answer this question, this study draws on the sociological literature surrounding women, work, and family, and the literature on entrepreneurial motivation, specifically push-pull theory. The sub-questions, therefore, are:

i) In terms of the dominant explanations offered by the sociological literature on women, work, and family are women who make the transition to self-employment after motherhood motivated by career or family concerns, or both? Is the transition a function of choice, or constraint?

ii) In terms of the dominant explanations offered by the entrepreneurial literature, are women who become self-employed after motherhood pulled to self-employment by the intrinsic benefits of entrepreneurship,
or are they *pushed* into self-employment by gendered barriers or structural constraints?

The recent body of literature on ‘mumpreneurship’ (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013) and maternal self-employment (McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013) has begun to answer a few of these questions in the British and European contexts, but has not focused specifically on the push-pull factors that influence the self-employment decision after motherhood.

This review found no in-depth qualitative or quantitative studies in Australia applying push-pull theory to maternal employment, or otherwise assessing the factors that motivate women to start their own businesses after motherhood. A review of the literature found only one academic paper on ‘mumpreneurship’ from Australia which argues that that women who become self-employed after motherhood are motivated by both push and pull factors, but their primary desire is “to create a better environment for their *family* and overall greater *community*” (Nel, Martiz & Thongprovati 2010, p.11). However, this paper was largely a conceptual overview of the phenomenon with a list of recommendations on how to succeed in business, based on case studies with two successful self-described ‘mumpreneurs’. Net et al. (2010) expressly highlight the paucity of research in this area, which the present study aims to address.

This research seeks to fill a substantial gap in understanding about maternal self-employment Australia by examining women’s self-employment narratives in light of the extant literature around women, work, and family and entrepreneurial motivation, specifically push-pull theory. In examining the decision to become self-employed after motherhood, this study accepts that women exercise agency in their employment decisions, but that these factors are shaped by broader social, cultural, and economic
factors that cannot be ignored. By focusing on a particular subset of female entrepreneurs – mothers – this research also answers the call for a conceptual approach to entrepreneurship that takes into consideration the influence of family, or household, structures on the entrepreneurial process.
Chapter Three:

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This qualitative study uses a theoretically-informed thematic approach (Braun & Clarke 2006) to narrative analysis (Riessman 1993, 2005, 2008; Polkinghorne 1995, 1988) to explore the motivations of self-employed mothers in Australia. The approach is qualitative, interpretative, and grounded in the choice-constraint/push-pull framework outlined in the preceding chapter. The study uses semi-structured interviews and questionnaire data collected from 60 women who became self-employed after becoming pregnant or having children to explore the factors that motivate some women to become self-employed after motherhood.

The existing literature on self-employment in Australia has tended to use traditional, objective measures of push and pull to conclude that women are mainly pulled into entrepreneurship by its intrinsic benefits, rather than pushed by external barriers or circumstances (Bennett & Dann 2000; Still & Walker 2006). But as highlighted in Chapter Two, these studies have tended to employ sampling and measurement tools that obscure the ambiguities or complexities of the push-pull dynamic, a shortcoming that has been recognised by some quantitative researchers in this area (Dawson & Henley 2012). The aim of this research is to examine the entrepreneurial motivations of a particular subset of female entrepreneurs – women with dependent children – using qualitative tools to paint a richer, more nuanced portrait of the self-employment decision, and illuminate the interplay between push and
pull, preference and constraint in the transition to self-employment (Mallon & Cohen 2001; Kirkwood 2009; Dawson & Henley 2012). This chapter proceeds with an overview of the methodological approach employed in this study, followed by a detailed explication of the research methods.

### 3.2 Qualitative inquiry

Qualitative research aims to understand and illustrate people’s experiences and actions using open-ended inquiry. The qualitative approach rejects the use of rigid positivist frameworks, which, by their very nature, limit or presuppose the variables being observed, a weakness which can be observed in some quantitative studies of push-pull motivations among entrepreneurs, for example (see Dawson & Henley 2012 for an extended discussion of these weaknesses). Whereas quantitative research is concerned with isolating and counting objects and creating statistically generalisable results, qualitative research focuses on creating rich descriptions of the phenomena under investigation via the detailed exploration of relatively small samples (Miles & Huberman 1994). Or as Elliot et al. (1999, p.216) argue, qualitative studies are carried out to answer scientific questions that are fundamentally different to those being asked by quantitative research. While the quantitative researcher is primarily focused on controlling variables and predicting outcomes, the qualitative researcher is more concerned with understanding participants’ perspectives; defining phenomena in terms of the meaning participants ascribe to those experiences; or developing theory inductively, from cases. The relative lack of rigid empirical frameworks in qualitative studies leaves open the possibility of unexpected findings. In this way, qualitative research can serve as a valuable complement to the positivist approach, particularly
where the subject is highly complex or under-researched, as is the field of maternal self-employment in Australia.

The main criticism levelled at qualitative research is that it is subjective and thus laden with the researcher’s personal values and interpretations. Positivists generally regard their research as value-free, and view the subjects they are studying as objects which are unaffected by the research being undertaken. While these critiques may be valid in the natural sciences, they are less convincing in social research, which is concerned with the actions and behaviours of people, society, and culture. Collis and Hussey (2009, pp.59–60) note that various studies have demonstrated that the very process of investigation can influence both researchers and participants, challenging the myth of the truly ‘objective’ researcher. Despite their claims of objectivity, quantitative researchers in the social sciences make a number of value-laden, assumption-driven choices every time they select variables to study. The use of flexibility and autonomy as unqualified pull factors in the entrepreneurial process is one example of this tendency (Bennett & Dann 2000; Still & Walker 2006), which obscures the ambiguous, and potentially gendered, distinction between wanting control over one’s work and time and needing it (e.g. to manage the daily responsibilities of caregiving). Qualitative studies, in contrast, aim to create richer, more detailed descriptions of phenomena, potentially highlighting previously unknown themes or patterns that can, in turn, be tested by quantitative researchers across the broader population. But while quantitative researchers assume a level of objectivity in their studies, qualitative researchers openly acknowledge that they hold values, even if those values are not made explicit.
3.3 Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis is an increasingly popular form of qualitative research that is concerned with how individuals (or communities, organisations, cultures, and even entire nations) interpret and engage with the world through the narratives – ‘life histories’ or ‘stories’ – people tell (Riessman 1993, 2008). Humans are story telling creatures. Individually and socially, people “lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin 1990, p.2), constructing and reconstructing their experiences in the world by recounting those experiences in words and pictures. These personal narratives allow us to organise our experiences in a coherent and meaningful way, to understand our actions and those of others, to find meaning in our choices, and make sense of major life events (Polkinghorne 1988, 1995; Riessman 1993, 2005, 2008). In this way, narratives are a vital form of “retrospective meaning making” (Chase 2005, p.656). They are our primary tool for understanding and contextualising our past experiences, and the foundation on which we base our current identities and future plans (Polkinghorne 1995).

Narrative analysis accepts that personal narratives are the product of human agency, a blend of objective facts and remembered fictions that are shaped by the broader socio-cultural contexts in which these narratives are created. Participants exercise agency by deciding what details and events to include in their personal histories and which to leave out, how those events are plotted, and whether to cast themselves as the heroes or victims of their stories (Chase 2005, p.656; Riessman 1993). Told over time, these narratives shape not only individuals’ recollection of past events, but also their present and future sense of self (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas 2008). Narrative researchers accept that individuals reconstruct reality when they
recall and recount their experiences of the past. As such, narrative researchers are generally less interested in the historical or objective ‘truth’ of participants’ first-person accounts than with understanding how those individuals perceive, or make sense of, their experiences.

Narrative data can take a variety of forms, including interviews, personal letters and diaries, videos, art works, and participant observation, none of which are mutually exclusive. In any of these contexts, a narrative may be a short personal history concerning a particular event; an extended personal history about a significant part of one’s life; or a complete autobiography (Chase 2005). The aim of narrative research is to move away from the rigid, empirical frameworks associated with quantitative methods and create rich descriptions drawn from the complexities of first-person accounts. As virtually no area of human life is immune from storytelling, narrative analysis research has been applied across multiple disciplines, including the study of health care (Lindsay 2006; Bailey 1996; Sandelowski 1991; Williams 1984); psychology (Polkinghorne 1988, 1995); careers (Kirkwood & Tootell 2008; Bujold 2004; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Cochran 1990); gender (Hamilton 2006); and entrepreneurship (Duberley & Carrigan 2013; García & Welter 2013; Larty & Hamilton 2011; Gartner 2010).

Riessman (2005, 2008) identifies four broad approaches to narrative analysis, which can be used independently or in combination. They are: structural analysis, which examines the structural and linguistic elements of narratives; interactional analysis, which examines how narratives are co-constructed in the interaction between the storyteller and the listener, or audience; and visual analysis, which focuses on the stories told visually through art, film, or digital media; and most commonly, thematic analysis,
which is concerned with identifying themes in a single narrative or group of narratives, or categorising narratives by type.

Analysts using thematic analysis can approach the data in two ways: *inductively* or *theoretically* (Braun & Clarke 2006, pp.10–11). In an inductive approach, recurrent or patterned themes are identified in the data without reference to a pre-existing theoretical framework. The data themes, and even the overall research questions, are developed inductively, looking at the data from the ‘bottom up’. In a theoretically-informed thematic analysis, themes are developed from pre-existing theoretical or analytical frameworks, and mapped onto the data from the ‘top down’. Researchers in a theory-driven approach are more concerned with understanding and developing rich descriptions around a *particular* aspect of a wider phenomenon, rather than explicating the phenomenon in its entirety. These two approaches to thematic analysis need not be mutually exclusive, however. One can approach the data from a ‘top down’ theoretical perspective, but still remain open to new themes that appear within the data. Conversely, one can approach the data inductively, and then relate emergent themes back to a pre-existing theoretical framework in the subsequent analysis. In narrative analysis, like many other qualitative approaches, the researcher has a substantial degree of leeway in deciding how to approach the data (Braun & Clarke 2006).

This research applies a theoretically-informed thematic approach to classify and explore the first-person narratives of 60 women who became self-employed after motherhood. A gender-sensitive push-pull framework (Kirkwood 2009; Hughes 2005; Dawson & Henley 2012) is used to classify the narratives, which are then sorted and analysed for themes around work and family preferences. It is important to note, however, that the theoretical framework that informs this process does not force the
researcher into the testing of hypotheses. Rather, the aim of the research is to utilise this prior knowledge to organise and illuminate the data, whilst remaining open to new concepts or themes. This allows the researcher to gather rich and detailed information about the phenomenon, describing as accurately as possible the phenomenon from the perspective of the participants themselves whilst keeping an open mind for themes that may not have been suggested by the existing research.

3.3.1 Validating narrative analysis

In a thematic narrative analysis, the researcher is primarily concerned with analysing the content of the narrators’ accounts rather than the structure; what is told, rather than how it is told. Embedded in this approach is the assumption that language is a “direct and unambiguous route to meaning” (Riessman 2005, p. 2) – that the participant, the researcher, and the reader all understand what is being said and what is meant. Researchers accomplish this “by focusing on the meaning that any competent user of the language would find in a story” (Riessman 2005, p.3). Language is the tool for understanding participants’ stories, rather than the topic of investigation (as in semiotics or discourse analysis).

In this respect, the process of telling and hearing a narrative is intersubjective; it depends on the shared understandings between the teller and the receiver that give the story context and render it mutually intelligible. In this way, culture can be said to “speak itself” (Riessman 1993, p.5) through individual stories. Researchers examining a body of related narratives may attend to similarities and differences that emerge among them (Chase 2005, p.657), and begin to draw theoretical propositions from individual narratives or groups of narratives (Riessman 2008, p.13). Collectively, personal narratives of a similar shared experience – such as the transition to self-employment
after motherhood – can mesh to create a common narrative, or typology of narratives, about the nature of that experience (Riessman 1993, p.2) and the socio-cultural dynamics that shape, influence, or inform that experience. This approach is useful in identifying common (or divergent) elements across research participants and the phenomena they report, or for developing theory from cases.

The process used in this research is both interpretative and hermeneutic; it requires the researcher to try to understand the informant’s story in her own terms, and relay elements of that experience through the research. In this way, narrative inquiry can be said to employ a double hermeneutic: the researcher attempts to make sense of the informant, who in turn is trying to make sense of her own experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009; Bazeley 2013, pp.203–204). In other words, the ability to access another person’s world view is wholly dependent on the researcher’s ability to understand and conceptualise the participant’s personal account through a multilayered interpretative analysis. The first layer requires the participant to offer her narration of her story through spoken language. The second layer occurs when the researcher attempts to understand that account. Interpretation can be affected both by the participant’s ability to verbalise her thoughts and feelings, and the researcher’s ability to understand. In order to compensate for this potential deficit, the researcher must try to empathise with the participants (to understand what it is like to walk in their shoes) while questioning, or analysing, those experiences from an outsider’s perspective. Researchers who advocate interpretative methodologies argue that successful investigators combine both stances: they are both empathetic and questioning (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009, p.36).
Access to a participant’s world view can also be complicated by the researcher’s own preconceptions or experiences, a reality (and potential limitation) which must be acknowledged at the outset (Ashworth 1996). This is the first step in the hermeneutic circle, which offers a method for interpreting personal narratives (Young & Collin 1988, p.155). The hermeneutic circle is concerned with developing a holistic understanding of an issue, moving back and forth between the whole of a narrative and its contingent parts. During the interview phase, the researcher must continually check in with participants, paraphrasing and rephrasing the respondents’ answers to ensure common understandings, and requesting clarification on points when necessary.

Three examples of this type of mid-interview validation (taken from participants in the study) – paraphrasing, rephrasing, and a request for clarifications – are provided at Table 3.1. In each case, the validity checks conducted during the interview process yielded both affirmations of common understandings and additional data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1 Validity checking, mid-interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example 1: Paraphrasing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int. 06: But anyway, I’m sure if I hadn’t had children I would have just kept working full-time for that company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator: Right. That’s interesting. So definitely having children was a bearing on that? You decided to go freelance before, sort of, trialling working part-time. So you looked at the situation and thought, “Well, if I’m going to work part-time I might as well work for myself”. Did I understand that correctly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Int. 06: Yeah. That’s exactly right. It was partly, though, opportunistic. Because a friend who I had worked with at the same company had set up her own business doing research and asked me to work with her. And so, because I had an immediate source of freelance work, with a friend, so I knew it was going to be enjoyable, I took it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.1 Validity checking, mid-interview, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example 2: Rephrasing</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> Yes, I got given, you know—I had to either create my own project or something, or given roles that just needed to be plugged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Int. 57:</strong> In terms of management, you felt like there was no one giving you, like, “Here’s a path for you”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> Definitely not—both long-term, or even short-term.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Example 3: Request for clarification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> So what motivated you? Was it primarily looking for something that was going to enable you to be at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Int. 22:</strong> Yeah, yeah and have the flexibility to be around for the family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> So flexibility was, you’d say, your main motivating factor? The desire to be there for your kids? Also it sounds like a lack of other working options—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Int. 22:</strong> Exactly. Also the challenge, I do like a challenge. I’m not—if I—I’m the kind of person that if I have an idea for something, I’m happy to run with it and do it. I wouldn’t just think about it, I’d actually do it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Second, during the analytical phase, the researcher must continually compare her interpretations of the broader themes to the actual texts – the verbatim transcripts – to ensure that her analysis remains faithful to the experiences described. This continual, non-linear ‘checking-in’ with the data also serves as a form of quality control. It forces the researcher to compare her interpretations against the verbatim accounts to ensure that they are as true as possible to the meanings intended by the participants (Young & Collin 1988, pp.155–156).

It is impossible to judge the validity or reliability of a qualitative, narrative study by the standards of traditional empirical methods because the two approaches differ so radically in their views of what constitutes reality and how it can be measured (Bailey 1996; Polkinghorne 1995; Riessman 1993; Lincoln & Guba 1985). It is nonetheless
important to consider the validity of narrative data using epistemologically appropriate criteria. Over the years, myriad scholars have attempted to resolve this question (Chase 2005; Riessman 2005; Polkinghorne 1995; Schwandt 1994; Riessman 1993; Polkinghorne 1988; Lincoln & Guba 1985). The predominant mode of ensuring credibility in narrative research is transparency: good researchers make their processes as visible as possible, allowing for systematic scrutiny of the linkages between data, findings, and interpretation (Bailey 1996; Riessman 1993; Sandelowski 1993, 1991; Polkinghorne 1988).

Other researchers have proposed more systematic checklists to ensure validity in qualitative research. Elliot et al. (1999, pp.221–223) advocate seven guidelines for improving the prospects of publishing qualitative research in the psychological sciences, where positivist approaches dominate. First, they argue, researchers should: 1) own their perspectives, being upfront about their theoretical orientations and prior experience with the subject at hand. They should also be clear about the 2) characteristics of their sample, so that readers can better understand the range of persons and situations to which the study findings might be relevant, and 3) acknowledge the limitations of what can reasonably be concluded from the sample, both in terms of size and characteristics. Researchers should also 4) ground their findings in concrete examples from the interview data, painting as near a picture as possible to the stories related by the participants and 5) cross-check findings for validity – either with study participants or research colleagues, or by triangulating with prior studies. Finally, researchers should aim to 6) tell a coherent story about the phenomenon that 7) resonates with readers. This combination of recommendations, combined with
transparency about the research method, can greatly enhance the trustworthiness (Riesman, 1993, p. 64) of qualitative research.

It is important to state that the aim of narrative analysis is not to create a single ‘true’ account of the phenomenon under study. Rather, the aim of these validity checks is to ensure the credibility of the themes that are produced during the analysis phase and that the final write-up of remains as faithful as possible to the narrative accounts provided by the study participants. It is also important to acknowledge, however, that the interpretative nature of narrative research means that it is unlikely that two researchers looking at the same data will develop the same themes, codes, or typologies, or that what resonates with one reader will automatically resonate with another. Many researchers argue that qualitative, interview-based research is essentially a creative process, and the application of any check list or validity test will necessarily vary from study to study (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009, p.184; Riessman 1993). But simply adhering to these or any similar criteria represents a commitment to transparency and rigour that will greatly enhance the credibility of the research.

The power of any narrative inquiry can be judged by the light it sheds on personal narratives in a broader social and cultural context. Readers can make links between a study's findings and their own experiences, weighing those against claims in the existing literature (Smith & Osborn 2008, p.56). In this respect, narrative analyses are more concerned with theoretical rather than empirical generalisability. Like good literature, rich descriptions of unique, personal experiences “may take us into the universal because [they touch] on what it means to be human at its most essential. The specifics are unique, but they are hung on what is shared and communal” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009, p.284, brackets added).
3.3.2 Narrative analysis in the study of women’s careers

This study follows a well-established tradition of using qualitative interviews to understand women’s career decisions or transitions in the context of wider discourses on gender, motherhood, and work (Stone 2007; Blair-Loy 2003; Gerson 1986, 2009; Hochschild 1989; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a; Hughes 2005; Knörr 2011; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Murtagh, Lopes & Lyons 2011). Although these works concentrate on different subsets of women – including high-powered executives within organisations, female entrepreneurs, and stay-at-home mothers who do not engage in paid work – they are all concerned with the ways in which women attempt to combine, or choose between, paid work and family life. These studies, the findings of which are outlined in Chapter Two, illustrate how narrative data can reveal the “richness and complexity” (Stone 2007, p.248) of women’s employment decisions, allowing the researcher to elucidate complicated phenomena in a comprehensive, but nuanced way.

This research is particularly informed by the recent body of work examining women’s transitions to entrepreneurship, specifically Mallon and Cohen’s (2001) study using career narratives to explore women’s transitions from professional roles to self-employment, and subsequent studies exploring this transition using related interview-based methodologies (McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Knörr 2011; Patterson & Mavin 2009; Kirkwood 2009). All of these studies employ in-depth interviews of relatively small samples, examining women’s accounts of their decision-making processes with respect to their self-employment decisions. These studies use a combination of non-probability, purposive, and snowball sampling to identify subjects (mainly women) who have chosen self-employment; and then apply a variety of interpretivist methods to
understand the subjective meanings women assigned to those experiences. The methodologies employed include: case studies (Patterson & Mavin 2009, n=4; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013, n=25), phenomenological analysis (Knörr 2011, n=9), grounded theory (Kirkwood 2009, n=75), and narrative analysis (Mallon & Cohen 2001, n=41). The findings from these studies were discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

The research methodology employed in this study is also informed by the nascent body of literature surrounding ‘mumpreneurship’ (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013). Ekinsmyth applies a variety of methodological approaches to explore the spatial and temporal dimensions of ‘mumpreneurship’, combining qualitative interviews (2011, n=28, 2013b, n=30) and survey responses (2013b, n=39, 2013b, n=150) with post-structuralist discourse analysis of Internet discussions of ‘mumpreneurship’ (2013b, n=150), while Duberley and Carrigan apply narrative analysis to in-depth interviews conducted with relatively small samples collected in the United Kingdom (2013, n=20; see also, Carrigan & Duberley 2013, n=20).

All of these studies employ explicitly qualitative and interpretative approaches to women’s individual career ‘stories’, which “are about looking at the events of one’s life in some sort of retrospect, probably putting on a gloss and attempting to tidy up the loose ends” (Mallon 1998, p.365). The retrospective and subjective nature of these stories does not make them any less useful from a research perspective. The objective ‘reality’ or factual ‘truth’ of each individual account from the perspective of others matters less than the women’s own interpretations of how their individual desires or perceived circumstances motivated them to certain decisions or behaviours.
3.4 Data collection

This section and the following will detail how this research was organised and carried out – the ‘architecture’ of the study (Strauss & Corbin 1998)– building on the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two. This section outlines the criteria used to select the study sample, and the study’s use of social media networks to develop a non-probability sample. It also explains the processes and rationales employed in data collection, including the interview structure and the questionnaire.

3.4.1 Recruitment and sampling

As stated in Chapter Two, this research applies the broad definition of entrepreneurial activity employed by the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*, defining entrepreneurship as “any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organisation, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, team of individuals, or an established business,” (Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros 2011, p.9). Given the scarcity of empirical research on maternal self-employment in Australia, the parameters for participation in the study were purposefully broad, designed with the intent of identifying women with first-hand experience of the phenomenon under questions without presupposing too much about their characteristics (Mays & Pope 1995).

Study participants had to meet four basic criteria: 1) be female; 2) have dependent children; 3) run their business or businesses in Australia; and 4) have started their business or become self-employed after falling pregnant, having children, or having a child come into their care (i.e. through adoption, fostering, or step-parenting). The study was limited to participants running their businesses in Australia,
which served a twofold purpose: to situate the study in a common social, cultural, and economic environment, and to fill a substantial gap in both the women, work, and family and entrepreneurship literature in Australia by looking specifically at the start-up rationales of self-employed mothers. Women without dependent children were excluded from the study in order to ensure that the participants’ responses were based on a current experience of combining self-employment and motherhood. Whilst it was understood that some women who had become self-employed in the year or two prior to their children becoming independent could potentially be excluded from the study, the criterion was set to ensure consistency across the sample.  

To explore the impact of motherhood and family on the entrepreneurial process, and thus answer a call for entrepreneurship studies that take into account the household, or family, context in which the entrepreneurial process is ‘embedded’ (Aldrich & Cliff 2003; de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007), only women who had started their businesses or become self-employed after falling pregnant, having children, or having a child come into their care were included in the study. Active motherhood – defined by the presence of dependent children – was the only limiting characteristic. This study did not impose limits on women’s participation by the age of their children, their duration in business, or their motives for becoming self-employed. Nor did it

7 In practice, only one participant was disqualified at the questionnaire stage for not having dependent children. Another interested volunteer made contact via email and requested to participate even though she no longer had dependent children. On further probing, it emerged that she had started her business more than 25 years prior and that her children had been independent for some time. Though it was clear she had significant experience combining self-employment and motherhood, it was determined that the timeframe that had elapsed since her decision to become self-employed, and her experience of being self-employed while raising children, was too great to provide a current narrative.

8 The Australian Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey defines dependent children as children under the age of 15. Children over the age of 15 are classified as “dependent students”. There was no set definition of dependency applied in this study. Participants were allowed to decide for themselves if they had a child who was financially dependent on them, regardless of the child’s age. As a result, two mothers were selected who had disabled children who were not legally minors, but were still physically, financially, and emotionally dependent.
impose limits on women’s participation in the study by the timing of their transition to self-employment relative to the onset of motherhood. This allowed for the inclusion of women with a wide range of circumstances and motivations, rather than presupposing certain specific events or characteristics (e.g. the birth of one’s first child, or the presence of very young children) as the primary triggers for self-employment. As a result, subjects were included in the sample who became self-employed to accommodate the needs of their pre-adolescent or teenage children (e.g. Int. 12, 31), or to meet the caregiving requirements of a disabled adult child (e.g. Int. 26, 44). Other participants included women who stayed in organisational employment after the birth of their first or subsequent children, but later found that those working arrangements became undesirable or unworkable due to logistics or stress (e.g. Int. 18, 33), child care (e.g. Int. 49, 58), ‘glass ceiling’ constraints (e.g. Int. 15, 42, 57) a revocation or change in flexible working arrangements (e.g. Int. 29), or a preference to work from home while caring for a young child (e.g. Int. 17).

This is a methodological distinction between this research and some of the ‘mumpreneurship’ research that has been conducted to date. Some of this early research has tended to use purposive or snowball sampling to select women who self-identify as ‘mumpreneurs’ – by attending a ‘mumpreneurship’ conference, for example (Ekinsmyth 2011) – or who started their businesses with the deliberate, articulated goal of running their businesses around their family responsibilities (Duberley & Carrigan 2013). This study, like Ekinsmyth’s more recent research (2013a, 2013b), or subsequent research by Carrigan and Duberley (2013), does not limit the sample to women who have purposefully constructed their businesses around their children, or who explicitly embrace the ‘mumpreneur’ identity. This research is interested in the
entrepreneurial motivations of all women who become self-employed after motherhood, regardless whether their intention was primarily family-driven or career-driven.

Ethical approval for recruiting was obtained from The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee on 28 September 2012. A web site was established explaining the nature of the research and what participation in the study entailed, including downloadable copies of a detailed Participant Information Statement and Participant Consent Form, which are included at Appendix 1.1 and Appendix 1.2. Recruitment was then conducted via social media networks, mainly Facebook and Twitter groups aimed at broad based women-in-business or working-mother groups, whose members may or may not identify as ‘mumpreneurs’, as well as networks populated by self-identified ‘mumpreneurs’. All recruitment materials and communications were careful to avoid use of the term ‘mumpreneur’ and its variants, to avoid alienating potential volunteers who do not identify with – or who actively reject – the label.

Emails and private messages were sent to the administrators of well-positioned networking groups via Facebook asking them to share the call for volunteers among their members. Announcements were sent to followers of the study’s dedicated Twitter account (@mothers_in_co) and posted as hashtags (#) where self-employed women were likely to congregate. These brief announcements directed interested volunteers to the dedicated web site, where they could learn more about the research and register their interest or queries. Participants who confirmed that they had read the Participant Information Statement were sent a link to the first stage of data collection: the online demographic questionnaire.
Initially, the desired sample size for this study was 30 women, an average size for a thematic narrative study (Braun & Clarke 2006). Due to overwhelming interest from potential volunteers, the decision was made to double the sample size to 60 women, a large sample for a narrative study (Bailey 1996). Smaller, homogeneous sample sizes are associated with defining ‘essences’ in narrative research, whilst larger, more heterogeneous samples are more useful for developing theory (Sandelowski 1995). With larger sample sizes, however, the researcher must take particular care not to lose the idiographic, or case-based, nature of narrative research. This was achieved in the present study by identifying groups of related narratives within the larger sample, and then analysing those smaller sub-samples individually for patterned themes and responses. It is nevertheless important to acknowledge that some nuance in the analysis may have been lost with the decision to increase the sample size. However, the level of interest generated by this study suggests that there is significant scope for further research in this area.

The study employed purposive, non-probability sampling: volunteers who met the eligibility requirements were admitted to the study on a first-come, first-served basis. Women who acknowledged receipt of the Participant Information Statement, completed the online questionnaire, and participated in the interview process were admitted into the study until the desired sample size was achieved. The aim of this purposive, non-probabilistic sampling approach was not to establish a random or statistically representative sample of the population, but "to identify specific groups of people who either possess characteristics or live in circumstances relevant to the social phenomenon being studied" (Mays & Pope 1995, p.110). This approach, combined with the broad recruitment sweep enabled by social networking, allowed for the inclusion of
a wide range of informants who had first-hand experience of the phenomenon under study.

Acceptance of the use of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter in gathering data in social research is gaining acceptance in some quarters (Baltar & Brunet 2012), although it is still contested in others (Stanton 1998; Coomber 1997, cited in Baltar and Brunet 2012: 58). Sample bias is the most common critique levelled at this approach, as the Internet-connected demographic represents a skewed selection of the general population. This is perhaps an insurmountable barrier where a genuinely random sample is required in order to create statistically generalisable results. That is not the aim of the present study. Here, the use of social networking offered up two distinct advantages. First, the use social networking offered arm’s length access to an exponentially greater pool of potential volunteers, who may have been difficult to access via traditional qualitative recruitment methods such as snowballing or posting a flyer in a public place. By getting the word out to groups that were well outside the researcher’s geographical and social ambit, the use of social networking to establish a non-probabilistic sample of self-employed mothers acted to substantially increase the sample size and its potential representativeness (Baltar & Brunet 2012). The use of social networking adds an element of randomness to the recruitment process, since the researcher cannot control what happens to the initial Twitter or

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9 It is important to consider, however, that the penetration of Internet and social media ‘connectivity’ has expanded significantly since these initial critiques were first raised (see, for example Fricker & Schonlau 2002, p.357).

10 For example, the original Twitter call for volunteers that was posted via the dedicated research handle @mothers_in_co was retweeted 24 times. Many of those who re-tweeted the call for volunteers had many more followers than this researcher, resulting in multiple inquiries in a matter of days. Similarly, a Facebook update that was posted to a nationwide women-in-business networking group’s member page was picked up and promoted by a rural women’s networking group, resulting in seven new volunteers from remote and hard-to-reach populations.
Facebook post once it is in the public domain, and access to this information is relatively free. Moreover, the use of social networking also helped to overcome the ‘administrative invisibility’ of women who become self-employed after becoming mothers (Baltar & Brunet 2012). Although the Australian Bureau of Statistics collects information about the sex and family status of business operators in Australia, it does not collect information on the timing of business establishment relative to family status. That is, we know how many business owners are female, how many female business owners have children and how many children they have; but we do not know how many women in Australia start their businesses specifically after having children. The aim of this research is not to answer the latter question, though it is certainly worthy of further statistical analysis. Social networking offers a powerful tool to reach these hidden or hard-to-reach persons in an indirect way.

3.4.2 Informed consent

The career narratives that provide the basis for this research were collected between October and December 2012. In all, 68 women completed the demographic questionnaire, of which 60 were selected for interview (the selection process is described below). Because the respondents came from across Australia, and were located in both urban and rural areas, the interviews were conducted by telephone over an intensive eight week period. The compressed timeframe of the interviews emerged from a desire to capitalise on the interest generated by the social networking recruitment campaign, and helped to include participants who might have otherwise been swayed by the time commitments entailed in participating in qualitative research (e.g. setting up and participating in in-depth interviews). Another advantage of conducting a large number of interviews in a relatively short timeframe was that it
allowed certain themes and patterns to become evident to the researcher during the
data collection process that could be further explored in the interview process.

This research adhered to The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics
Committee’s guidelines for interviewing volunteers and the use of information obtained
from these interviews. Informed consent was achieved through a multilayered process.
Prior to being interviewed, volunteers were informed of the nature and purpose of the
research at various stages. Women who learned of the study via social networking
groups were first directed to the research web site where they could read about the
project and contact the researchers – electronically or by telephone – with any queries.
Women who were still interested in volunteering at this point had to contact the
research team\textsuperscript{11} directly via email in order to register their interest, whereupon they
were sent an electronic copy of the Participant Information Statement. Once the
participants acknowledged receipt of the Participant Information Statement, they were
given access to the online demographic questionnaire. Only when they had completed
the online questionnaire were the women contacted to set up an interview. This
multilayered approach established four points at which potential participants could
passively withdraw from the study before they committed to the interview: 1) upon
reading the information in the web site; before completing the email request for further
information 2) upon receiving the Participant Information Statement and Participant
Consent Form by email; 3) upon receiving the questionnaire, or during completion of
the questionnaire; and 4) upon scheduling the interview.

\textsuperscript{11} This research was supervised by Prof. Marian Baird and Associate Prof. Rae Cooper of The
University of Sydney Business School. Although both of their names were listed as co-researchers in the
communication documents, all 60 interviews were conducted exclusively by the author.
A handful of participants did withdraw in this way. For example, of those who made it to stage three, two failed to complete the questionnaire. Three more women who did complete the questionnaire did not return calls or emails to schedule the interview. Their unavailability signalled a voluntary withdrawal, and their questionnaire results have been excluded from the final analysis. A key advantage of this approach is that it ensures informed consent among the participants. A potential disadvantage is that it favours applicants with sufficient time to stay connected with the project. Availability is a potential sample bias in any qualitative study, as the interview process requires a significant time commitment on the part of the subject. Enthusiasm for this study was substantially high, however. Many of the participants made themselves available despite reporting full-time or greater-than-full-time working hours on top of their household responsibilities. The use of telephone interviews offset this time commitment substantially, as many women were able to multi-task while they were being interviewed. One participant confided that she was scrubbing the bathroom while we spoke; another stopped our conversation briefly to assist her sick daughter, who vomited in the middle of the interview.

The recruitment phases are illustrated in Figure 3.1. All recruitment communications initiated by the researcher are illustrated on the left-hand side of the diagram, and all communications initiated by the participants are illustrated on the right. The numbers represent the various opportunities presented to the participants for passive withdrawal from the study between looking at the research information website and committing to interview. Participants were also informed of their rights to actively withdraw from the study at any time up to publication without affecting their relationship with The University of Sydney.
Before being interviewed, however, all participants were required to complete the demographic questionnaire. The aims of the questionnaire were three-fold: (1) to determine eligibility for the study, in keeping with the criteria outlined above; (2) to establish a demographic profile of the self-selected sample; and (3) to collect answers to some closed and open-ended questions that could serve as conversation prompts in the interviews or be used in the final analysis.
Demographic details collected included: participants' age, education, income, marital status, business type, among other items. A complete version of the questionnaire is included at Appendix 2.1. It is important to reiterate that the main purpose of this study was to conduct a thematic narrative analysis of a group of women’s motivations for choosing self-employment after motherhood, not to produce statistically generalisable results. Ideally, the data collected in this phase could be compared against the broader population of self-employed mothers to establish the relative representativeness of the sample (Mays & Pope 1995; Baltar & Brunet 2012). Unfortunately, however, the Counts of Australian Business Operator (CABO) surveys periodically released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS 2013b, 2008) – the most comprehensive and reliable data source on self-employment in Australia – does not delineate demographic detail by parental status. It is impossible to know the distribution of business-operators with dependent children by age, education, geographical distribution, duration in business, industry profile, etc. Nevertheless, collecting this demographic information allowed the researcher to establish the characteristics of the self-selected sample, thereby allowing the reader to assess the individuals or situations for which the findings may be relevant (Elliott, Fischer & Rennie 1999). The narrative analysis of these women’s stories allows us to understand what stories are being told; the demographic questionnaire allows us to understand by whom.

A number of open-ended questions in the survey provided opportunities for respondents to consider and discuss, in their own terms, their motivations for becoming self-employed, as well as their experiences of being employed by someone else. These responses provided the first glimpse of potential patterns and themes, and provided
valuable prompts for the interviewer. In addition, some of the questions (for example, “Would you ever consider working for someone else (as an employee) instead of being self-employed?”) raised interesting results that were then explored more deeply in the interviews. Beyond providing a demographic profile of the sample, the surveys provided a road map for deeper and more targeted engagement during the interview process.

3.4.4 The sample

In sum, there were 74 individual responses to the questionnaire. Six women were disqualified by the eligibility requirements: one who no longer had dependent children; one whose business was based outside Australia; and two who started their businesses before having children. Two respondents failed to complete the questionnaire. Of the 68 valid questionnaires received, eight respondents were not interviewed, either because they completed the questionnaire after the desired sample size was reached (n=6), or because they passively withdrew by declining to return calls or emails requesting to set a time to conduct the interview (n=2).

This section outlines the characteristics of the 60 women who completed both the questionnaire and the in-depth interview.

Age. Most of the women who participated in this study were between the ages of 35-44 (58.3 percent), followed by women aged 45-54 (20 percent), women aged 25-34 (18.3 percent), and women aged 55-59 (3 percent). The sample in this study represents a younger overall age distribution than the general population of self-employed women in Australia – of whom 27 percent are aged 55 or older (ABS 2013b) – reflecting the participants’ status as mothers of dependent children.
Marital status. A substantial majority of the women in the study were married or living with a partner (90 percent) compared to 10 percent who were lone mothers, almost exactly equal to the distribution found in the general population of self-employed women with dependent children (ABS 2013b). Among the 90 percent of sample participants who were married or living with a partner, about two-thirds (66.7 percent) reported being secondary income earners in the household, compared to 22.2 percent who were the primary income earners, and 9.3 percent who earned about the same as their spouse. Most of the women in the sample had two children (60 percent), followed by women with one child (25 percent), three children (13.3 percent), and four children (1.7 percent). Most of the women in the sample (n=42) had at least one school-aged child (age 5 or older); 18 women in the sample had only young children (age 0-4).

Nationality. Most of the women in the study were Australian citizens (86.7 percent). Only one respondent (1.7 percent) was of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Of those who were not Australian citizens, 11.7 percent were permanent residents and just one respondent (1.7 percent) was a temporary resident. All of the women in the study, however, reported running businesses based in Australia, a requisite for participating. Of the 30 percent who were not born in Australia, the backgrounds were wide and varied. Participants hailed from the United Kingdom (n=8), New Zealand (n=3), Hong Kong (n=2), Canada, Malaysia, Jordan, Lebanon, and Colombia (n=1, respectively).

Education. The women in the sample were, on the whole, highly educated. All of the women interviewed except two had completed some form of post-secondary qualification prior to starting their businesses. Among the respondents, 23 percent had completed a Certificate, Diploma, or Advanced Diploma. Almost three-quarters had
completed some form of tertiary education, including 31.7 percent with a Bachelor’s degree, 11.7 percent with a Graduate Certificate or Diploma, and 30 percent with a Master’s degree or higher.

Income. The individual weekly earnings before tax of the women in the study are shown at Figure 3.2. The results show exactly one third of the sample (33.3 percent) earning less than AUD$599 per week, compared to 38.3 percent who reported earnings of more than AUD$1,000 per week. In comparison, the national minimum wage for a full-time worker in Australia was AUD$606.40 in 2012. Although it is not possible to compare these results with the individual weekly earnings of self-employed mothers nationally, the results suggest a disproportionately high concentration of weekly earnings above AUD$1,000. This may be attributable to the participants’ higher overall levels of education, or simply self-selection bias owing to the method of recruitment. Higher achieving women may be more inclined to participate in business networking forums, either online or in person, and may also be more willing to volunteer for a study like this one.

Figure 3.2 Individual weekly earnings before tax (n=60)
Geography. The study participants came mostly from New South Wales (70 percent), followed by Victoria (13.3 percent), Queensland (10 percent), the Australian Capital Territory (3.3 percent), South Australia (1.7 percent), and Tasmania (1.7 percent). There were no volunteers from Western Australia or the Northern Territory. The majority of the respondents were from Major Cities (75 percent), followed by roughly equal proportions from Outer Regional (11.6 percent) and Inner Regional (10 percent) areas, and one respondent from a Remote Area (1.7 percent), using the Australian Standard Geographical Classification of the respondents’ postcodes.

Working patterns. The majority of women in the study (70 percent) reported operating their businesses from their homes, followed by 16.7 percent who operated their businesses from dedicated premises outside the home, 10 percent at a client’s workplace or home, or other location (3.3 percent). The large number of home-based businesses in the sample consistent with findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics Time Use Survey 2006, which suggest that working from home is most common among women with children aged 14 years or younger (AIFS 2008).

The hours the women in the study reported working in their businesses varied considerably, with 30-34 hours per week being the most commonly cited number of hours (16.7 percent of respondents). The distribution of working hours is shown in Figure 3.3.
Business profile. The majority of the women in the sample were operating unincorporated businesses, either as sole-traders\(^ {12}\) (63.3 percent) or in partnerships (8.3 percent). Just over one quarter were operating incorporated businesses, either in the form of proprietary limited companies (21.7 percent) or trusts (6.7 percent).

Most of the study participants operated just one business (83.3 percent). Most of the study participants also had no employees (68.3 percent). Of the 31.7 percent who were employers, most ran micro businesses of fewer than five employees (23.3 percent) or small businesses of between 5 and 14 employees (6.7 percent). Only one participant operated a medium-sized business with 20 to 199 employees (1.7 percent).

Most of the women in the survey had started their businesses as new (91.7 percent), although a few joined an existing business as a partner (3.3 percent), purchased an existing business and built it up (1.7 percent), or classified themselves as

\(^{12}\) Also sometimes referred to as sole-proprietors or own account workers.
independent contractors (3.3 percent). Some of the women had prior entrepreneurial experience, either running their own businesses (10.2 percent) or someone else’s business (8.5 percent) before starting a new business post-motherhood.

**Industry.** The vast majority of the businesses operated by the study participants were service-based businesses (86.7 percent), with professional, scientific, and technical services roles (such as marketing and other types of consultancy work) being the most common (36.7 percent). This was followed by health and social services (10 percent); information, media, and telecommunications services (8.3 percent); personal services (8.3 percent); administration and support services (6.7 percent); education and training (6.7 percent); rental, hiring, and real estate (5 percent); art and recreation services (3.3 percent); or financial and insurance-related services (1.7 percent). A minority of women ran trade-related businesses, either retail (6.7 percent) or wholesale (1.7 percent), and only a small handful of women operated businesses in agriculture, fishing, or forestry (3.3 percent), and manufacturing (1.7 percent)\(^\text{13}\).

**Business duration.** The range of business tenure in the sample varied considerably, as there was no requirement as to the length of time volunteers had to be running their own businesses to participate in the study. The aim of this was to capture a wide range of experiences of self-employment, which was achieved in the distribution shown in Figure 3.4 below. None of the volunteers had operated a business longer than 15 years, possibly owing to the requirement that participants had to have started their present business after having children, but still needed to have dependent children at home.

\(^{13}\) The percentages do not add up to exactly 100 percent due to rounding issues.
Finally, 15 of the women interviewed for this study were also working as employees for someone else in addition to running their own businesses. These dual-profile entrepreneurs either worked on a regular (16.7 percent) or casual (8.3 percent) basis. Of these dual-profile entrepreneurs, 94 percent worked fewer than 20 hours per week for someone else. But more than two-thirds of these women (68.8 percent) reported earning more than or about the same amount from their businesses as they did from their work as employees. Many of these dual-profile entrepreneurs appeared to be maintaining a foothold in organisational employment while they attempted to establish or build up their enterprises. One participant had voluntarily returned to organisational employment after a period of being wholly self-employed, but continued to run her business for profit on the side.
3.5 Data analysis

The 60 in-depth interviews that were conducted after the completion of the demographic questionnaire formed the primary data source for this thematic narrative analysis. These interviews were collected between October and December 2012. The average length of interviews was around 40 minutes, although individual interviews ranged from 15 minutes to more than an hour. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Women were assured strict confidentiality: that their true identities would be known only by the principle research team. All potentially identifying material in the interviews (such as first and last names; business names and, at times, the nature of their businesses; towns of residence; etc.) have been changed to preserve this confidentiality. This assurance allowed the women to speak freely about their past and present work experiences and family lives without fear of reprisal or embarrassment (Stone 2007, p.248).

Using the detailed questionnaires as prompts, the interviews were informed by previous interview-based studies of women and work (Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Ekinsmyth 2013a; García & Welter 2013; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Knörr 2011; Murtagh, Lopes & Lyons 2011; Gerson 2009; Kirkwood 2009; Patterson & Mavin 2009; Weaven, Isaac & Herington 2007; Stone 2007; Blair-Loy 2003; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Gerson 1986). The interviews ranged around three core themes: 1) work history and entrepreneurial motivation; 2) aspirations around career and motherhood, and 3) entrepreneurship versus organisational employment. These open-ended, semi-structured questions were designed to elicit responses that could be coded into matrix of gender sensitive push or pull factors, and provide insights into the career or family focused motivations of the women in the sample.
A typical interview included the following pattern of questions: what were the women doing before they started their own businesses; how they made the decision to start their own business; how self-employment compared to their previous work experiences; how they viewed self-employment in light of their previous employment experience(s); how they thought about their careers after motherhood; whether they would consider returning to organisational employment as an employee; and what their future plans were for their businesses and their careers. Though most interviews followed the same general pattern, variations were accommodated as alternative themes arose. The Interview Protocol and Semi-Structured Interview Schedule are attached at Appendix 2.2 and Appendix 2.3.

Consistent with the validity checklist advocated by Elliot et al. (1999, pp.221–223), which advocates that the researcher begin any qualitative project by owning her perspectives, it is important to highlight that the interviews were informed by and framed around my own experience as a woman who became self-employed on a part-time basis after the birth of my first child. So as not to colour the participants’ responses, this detail was not shared with the interview participants unless they asked, usually at the end of the interview, how the project emerged. Similarly, special care was taken during the interview process to paraphrase and re-state the subjects’ responses to key questions to ensure mutual understanding. Respondents were also advised to contact the research team by telephone or email if they wished to clarify or amend any of their answers. Two respondents followed up in this way.

This research follows Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase process for conducting a thematic narrative analysis. The first phase involves familiarisation with the data set as a whole, through the production of verbatim transcripts from audio
recordings of interviews, and multiple readings of those transcripts to develop a deep and intimate understanding of the data. Phase two is concerned with developing initial codes: identifying features of the data that of interest to the analyst or relevant to the phenomenon under research. In phase three, the researcher begins searching for themes, sorting and collating the individual codes into broader motifs. Phase four entails reviewing and refining the themes identified in phase three, followed by phase five, which involves defining and naming the themes. Only once these phases are complete does the researcher progress to the sixth and final phase: producing the report.

An overview of the process applied in this research is illustrated in Figure 3.5. The remainder of this chapter explains the process in greater detail.
3.5.1 Data immersion

Interviews with all 60 participants were audio-recorded and field notes were taken. Verbatim transcriptions were produced for every interview, resulting in hundreds of pages of narrative data. Some interviews were transcribed by the researcher, others were sent to a transcription service. Confidentiality was maintained by removing participants’ full names from all files. All transcripts were manually checked against the audio-recorded interviews for accuracy and to keep the researcher grounded in the particular context of each interview. To preserve confidentiality, each participant was assigned a pseudonym (first and last names), and any identifying details
(hometowns, name or nature of business, names of children, etc.) were changed in the transcripts and in the results. This process was followed by multiple readings of the transcripts, including manual note taking in the margins and highlighting of interesting material in the data (potentially relevant quotations, etc.). This process of immersion in the data laid the groundwork for the formal analysis.

### 3.5.2 Initial codes and themes

After the initial transcription and data immersion process, the research moved onto the coding phase, which involves identifying features of the individual narratives that are of interest to the researcher. Codes refer to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyzatis, 1998, p. 63 in Braun & Clarke 2006, pp.16–17). As this research was concerned with examining mothers’ self-employment decisions in light of the extant literature on entrepreneurial motivation and women, work, and family, the women’s narratives were analysed with a particular focus on gendered push or pull motivations (Hughes 2003, 2005, 2006; Kirkwood 2009; Dawson & Henley 2012), as well as preferences for work or family (Hakim 1995, 2000, 2002, 2006) or structural constraints (McRae 2003; Crompton & Harris 1998; Corby & Stanworth 2009; Moen & Yu 2000; Pocock 2003). The individual codes were then gathered into larger themes. Where codes reflect individual data elements of interest to the researcher, themes represent a more patterned response within the data set (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.10).

Table 3.2 demonstrates the initial codes and themes employed in the first round of organising the data, with reference to the theoretical underpinnings of each theme. As stated previously, a theoretically-informed thematic analysis uses prior research as a
framework for the data analysis. The references refer to the prior studies reviewed in the literature that have identified these themes as significant push- or pull factors in the entrepreneurial process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire to ‘be the boss’; Desire for respect or approval; Desire for increased social status.</td>
<td>Status</td>
<td>(Cromie 1987; Shane, Kolvereid &amp; Westhead 1991; Carter &amp; Cannon 1992; Kariv 2011; Jayawarna, Rouse &amp; Kitching 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to make more money; Desire for control over financial future.</td>
<td>Financial Gain</td>
<td>(Cromie 1987; Carter &amp; Cannon 1992; Bennett &amp; Dann 2000; Kirkwood 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for control over one’s career; Desire for self-determination; Desire for freedom to make short- and long-term decisions about one’s business; Desire for authority over the goals and direction of the business, as well as work standards.</td>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>(Cromie 1987; Hughes 2005; Orhan &amp; Scott 2001; Dawson &amp; Henley 2012; Bennett &amp; Dann 2000; Still &amp; Walker 2006; Kirkwood 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to control one’s working environment, including the ability to choose one’s clients and colleagues; Ability to control the type and quality of work.</td>
<td>Positive work environment</td>
<td>(Hughes 2005; McKie, Biese &amp; Jyrkinen 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for complex, varied work; Desire to learn and acquire new skills; Desire to build a successful business.</td>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>(Hughes 2005; Mainiero &amp; Sullivan 2006; Sullivan et al. 2007; Dawson &amp; Henley 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for intrinsically rewarding work; Desire for work that aligns with personal values; Desire to help others or make a difference.</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>(Hughes 2005; Mainiero &amp; Sullivan 2006; Sullivan et al. 2007; Dawson &amp; Henley 2012; Solymossy 1997; Knörr 2011)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Table 3.2 Initial codes and themes, continued</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Desire to find work that will enable one</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>to stay at home with the children;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of the work is secondary to</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>staying at home.</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Work from home</strong></td>
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<td>(Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a;</td>
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<td>Duberley &amp; Carrigan 2013; Carrigan &amp; Duberley</td>
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<td>2013; Walker, Wang &amp; Redmond 2008; Jayawarna,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rouse &amp; Kitching 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Desire for autonomy over time;</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ability to fit working hours around child</strong></td>
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<td><strong>care.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Control over time</strong></td>
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<td>(Rouse &amp; Kitching 2006; Jayawarna, Rouse &amp;</td>
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<td>Kitching 2013; McKie, Biese &amp; Jyrkinen 2013;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirkwood 2009)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Desire to “be available for the children”,</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>physically and emotionally;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Desire to be involved in children’s daily</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>lives (e.g. be physically present for</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>school drop-off or pickup, to shuttle</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>children to and from activities, and</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>attend important events such as school</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>performances, sporting events, etc.).</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Motherhood</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(de Bruin, Brush &amp; Welter 2007; Brush, de</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bruin &amp; Welter 2009; Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a,</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013b; Duberley &amp; Carrigan 2013; Carrigan</td>
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<td>&amp; Duberley 2013; Kirkwood 2009; Aldrich &amp;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cliff 2003; Hays 1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulty managing work-family</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>logistics; Stress.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work-family balance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Cromie 1987; Moen &amp; Yu 2000; Mallon &amp;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cohen 2001; Pocock 2003; Hughes 2006;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rouse &amp; Kitching 2006; Walker, Wang &amp;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redmond 2008; McKie, Biese &amp; Jyrkinen 2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Long hours culture of workplaces;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work culture incompatible with family</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>life;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulties with superiors or</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>supervisors.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Poor work culture</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Moore &amp; Buttner 1997; Mallon &amp; Cohen 2001;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hughes 2005, 2003; Mattis 2004; Kirkwood</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor quality part-time jobs;</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>‘Glass ceiling’ constraints within part-</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>time jobs;</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of advancement.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Poor part-time jobs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Moore &amp; Buttner 1997; Mallon &amp; Cohen 2001;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mattis 2004; Knörr 2011)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3.2 Initial codes and themes, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inability to negotiate flexible work arrangements with previous employer; Inability to find flexible work within organisations.</th>
<th>Lack of flexibility</th>
<th>(Mattis 2004; Hughes 2005; McKie, Biese &amp; Jyrkinen 2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary or involuntary redundancy; Unemployment.</td>
<td>Job Loss</td>
<td>(Gilad &amp; Levine 1986; Cooper &amp; Dunkelberg 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability (perceived or real) to find work that accommodates schedule requirements or desire for meaningful/challenging work.</td>
<td>Limited job opportunities</td>
<td>(Cromie 1987; Cromie &amp; Hayes 1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraction in industry leading to lack of job opportunities.</td>
<td>Industrial restructuring</td>
<td>(Gilad &amp; Levine 1986; Cooper &amp; Dunkelberg 1986)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from urban centres as a motivator for becoming self-employed; Lack of good quality jobs in remote areas.</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>(Newton, Wood &amp; Gottschalk 2003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.5.3 Developing the theoretical model

In this phase, the individual narratives were sorted into groups according to patterned similarities among the themes identified in the previous phase. This phase was concerned with moving from an examination of individual narratives toward developing a theoretical model of entrepreneurial motivations, based on the similarities and differences that were present in the sample group. To manage the relatively large data set, the women’s self-described motivations for becoming self-employed were coded in a table of push-pull themes. In the tables, ‘1’s represent the women’s main motivations and ‘x’ s represent the women’s secondary motivations in becoming self-
employed, or associated benefits of self-employment. Primary motivations were identified in the transcripts both implicitly and explicitly. Explicit signals included words or phrases such as “One of my main reasons or motivations was” (Int. 05), or, “The reason why I went into my business to start with is” (Int. 36). Other times, these explicit language signals were not used, rather the women focused their accounts on one or two elements that triggered their transition to self-employment. A participant’s self-employment account may focus primarily around a single trigger, such as an unexpected redundancy (Int. 20), extreme job dissatisfaction (Int. 29), or the inability to find or afford child care (Int. 59), for example. In the cases where multiple triggers were cited and a primary motivation was not explicitly described, no ‘1’s were entered into the table. Where multiple motivations were cited as primary drivers, or given equal weight in the narrative, multiple ‘1’s were entered into the chart.

Table 3.3 provides examples of the explicit and implicit language the participants used to describe their motivations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explicit cues:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Basically what prompted me was...” – Int. 01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One of my main reasons or motivations...” – Int. 05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“That was the main reason that I started my own business...” – Int. 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Being made redundant just before I had my son was kind of the breaking—I suppose not the breaking point, but more the motivating factor to go ahead...” – Int. 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I went into business so I wouldn’t have to...” – Int. 22</td>
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<tr>
<td>“A motivating factor for me was...” – Int. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The reason why I went into my business to start with is...” – Int. 36</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.3 Explicit and implicit motivation cues, continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implicit cues:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “I just felt that...” – Int. 04</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “I wanted a situation where...” – Int. 05</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “This sort of pushed me into making that decision.” – Int. 21</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “I couldn’t really find a position that was at the level I wanted.” – Int. 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “The idea was to...” – Int. 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “It’s really about...” – Int. 55</td>
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<tr>
<td>• “Ultimately, it was down to...” – Int. 58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once the narrative themes were entered into the chart, they were then sorted into groups according to the prevalence of push or pull factors in their accounts, and other patterned elements that emerged within the individual groups. Sorting narratives by groups and creating typologies is a typical representational strategy in thematic narrative analysis, using case studies or vignettes to illustrate the phenomenon and provide the richness and depth that is associated with narrative research (Riessman 2005, p.2). Examining the participants’ narratives through the lens of push- and pull factors revealed four groups of narratives: mostly pulled (career motives); mostly pulled (family motives); mixed motives (family and meaning); and mostly pushed (family and structural constraints). It is important to note that these tables do not represent the end point of this study, merely the starting point for grouping the narratives and identifying patterned responses, themes, and sub-themes.

Table 3.4 shows the patterned responses for the individuals who reported being mostly pulled into entrepreneurship by family motives.
Table 3.4 Mostly pulled (family motives)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Financial gain</th>
<th>Independence</th>
<th>Positive Environment</th>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Work from home</th>
<th>Control over time</th>
<th>Motherhood</th>
<th>Work-family balance</th>
<th>Poor work culture</th>
<th>Poor part-time jobs</th>
<th>Lack of flexibility</th>
<th>Child care</th>
<th>Job loss</th>
<th>Limited Opportunities</th>
<th>Industrial restructuring</th>
<th>Geography</th>
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<td>37</td>
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Table 3.5 shows the patterned responses for the individuals who reported being mostly pulled into entrepreneurship by career motives.

Table 3.5 Mostly pulled (career motives)

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Table 3.6 shows the patterned responses for the individuals who a combination of push and pull motivations, based on preference for both career and family.

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Table 3.7 shows the themed responses for the individuals who reported being mainly pushed into entrepreneurship by a variety of familial or external constraints.

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#### 3.5.4 Rich descriptions

The final phase of the research involved developing rich descriptions around the patterned themes that were identified within the four narrative groups identified in the push-pull schema. This section forms the basis of the next four chapters, highlighting
the complexity of women's self-employment choices after motherhood. In this final phase of the analysis, the patterned responses identified in phases two to four of the data analysis process (see Figure 3.5, above) were examined more closely, using first-person responses and case-specific narratives to illustrate the common themes within each group. Narrative extracts were carefully selected from the wider data set to provide vivid illustrations of the individual themes, taking care to also highlight sub-themes and subtle nuances between cases. The aim of this process is to create an analytic narrative that goes beyond merely describing the data towards making an argument supporting the research question (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.23).

The results highlighted in the next four chapters are based largely on the participants' responses to two open-ended questions: 1) what were you doing before you became self-employed? And: 2) what made you decide to start your own business? Although the wording and order of these two questions varied from interview to interview, all participants were asked some variation of these two questions. The responses to these core questions reveal that, for most women, the decision to become self-employed was a complex interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, preference and constraint.

Broadly, however, the women’s narratives fell into four distinct groups, based on the extent to which they reflected a predominance of push- or pull factors. These four groups were: mostly pulled (by family-related factors); mostly pulled (by career-related factors); pushed and pulled (by career and family factors); and mostly pushed (by career and family factors). The next four chapters examined the predominant themes that emerged in these four motivational groups, followed by a discussion of the major findings from this analysis.
Chapter Four:

Family-Focused Entrepreneurs

4.1 Introduction

Five women in the study – or eight percent of the sample – said they chose self-employment in order to stay at home and raise their children. The narratives of these *family-focused entrepreneurs* shared three central elements. First, the women in this group purposefully chose self-employment to fulfil a strong desire, or philosophical commitment, to care for their children at home. Second, the women’s businesses emerged as a way to realise this goal rather than to further any pre-existing career goals, although these ambitions sometimes emerged later, with the success of a venture. Despite their commitment to providing home-based, maternal care for their children, the *family-focused entrepreneurs* also sought to cultivate an identity beyond ‘just a stay-at-home mum’, and to remain connected to paid employment, even though they took pains to stress that caring for their children was their first priority.

All five women in this group were between the ages of 24 and 35, and were married or living with a domestic partner who was the primary breadwinner in the household. All had young children under the age of seven. Most were working part-time, either 1-14 hours per week (n=2) or 15-19 hours per week (n=2) in their businesses. Only one member of the group was working 35-39 hours per week in her business. Three out of the five women had been operating their businesses for fewer than 12 months, and four out of the five women had gross weekly earnings of AUD$599 or less, including one participant (Int. 09) who had yet to make any taxable income from her
business, compared to the national minimum weekly wage of AUD$606.40 in 2012. The participant who had been in business the longest (3>5 years) was the notable exception, with gross weekly earnings of AUD$2000 or more, putting her income roughly equal to that of her business-partner husband. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the family-focused entrepreneurs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int.</th>
<th>Name#</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. Children</th>
<th>Age of Youngest Child</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Business Duration</th>
<th>Income (AUD/wk)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Shauna Davis</td>
<td>24-35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Online retailer</td>
<td>&gt;12m</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Georgina Mitchell</td>
<td>24-35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Proofreading</td>
<td>&gt;6m</td>
<td>1-149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mandy Franklin</td>
<td>24-35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Wholesaler</td>
<td>1&gt;3yrs</td>
<td>400-599</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Agnes Pulito</td>
<td>24-35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>&gt;6m</td>
<td>400-599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Lucy Kingman</td>
<td>24-35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Party Supplies</td>
<td>3&gt;5yrs</td>
<td>2000+</td>
</tr>
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# Participants’ names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

The women’s motivations for becoming self-employed are explored in the remainder of this chapter.

4.2 The importance of maternal care

Georgina Mitchell (Int. 17) was a human resources manager at a large public university when she became pregnant with her first child. Georgina had worked in various human resources roles for several years, building up her expertise in the field. Yet despite her well-developed resume, Georgina said she never really considered her work as “a career”. After her first son was born, she reluctantly returned to her organisational employment and began looking for ways to work from home:
The first period of maternity leave that I had right after my son was born, I really wanted to stay home. I didn’t actually want to go back to work. I spent a lot of time trying to work out what options I had for working from home. I ran through the whole kind of creative stuff and making things and selling them at the markets, and that’s quite labour and time intensive.

And I ended up going back to the university part-time. And after I started working again, I got a magazine—you know, the ones from either online courses or local TAFES [vocational colleges] or that kind of thing, and they have a listing of all their courses? I was looking through that to get some inspiration and saw proofreading and editing as a course... And I thought, ‘Well actually, I do a lot of that stuff anyway within the work that I do and that’s something that I’ve always enjoyed—that’s something I can do’. – GM/17

Georgina completed the course by correspondence while working part-time at the university, where, by her own account, she had enjoyed highly flexible conditions.

After taking a generous period of maternity leave following the birth of her first child, Georgina’s request to return to work part-time – three days per week, four hours per day – was met with ease, an arrangement that was contractually guaranteed for up to five years. The conditions for working parents offered by her employer were, in Georgina’s own words, “amazing”, but still not sufficient to keep her there. After the birth of her second child, Georgina resigned to begin building up her business. She described her feelings about organisational employment – even in a very family-friendly, flexible environment – this way:

At the end of the day, you still have to be there for those four hours. And yeah, I guess if my children were older, I don’t think that would be an issue. But having a child who was still not yet at school— that was a big issue for me.

My mum was around a lot when we were little. Dad worked very, very long hours. So, I guess we always had the stability of mum being at home. And it wasn’t until I was kind of a little bit older that we’d probably go to my grandparents’ after school. So, I guess having that, the family influence
around, I think was really important to me and I want my son and my daughter to have that as well. – GM/17

The experience of not wanting to be away from home was echoed by Agnes Pulito (Int. 37), who returned to work when her first child was five-months-old to provide the family income after her partner lost his job. She found her job as a community services worker stressful and unrewarding. But mostly, she wanted to be at home with her baby. For her, working outside the home was tolerable as a financial necessity, but working from home was the ideal:

I never really wanted to be there; I really wanted to be at home. My partner looked after my baby. We kind of got into a groove and, you know, you get back into the rhythm. But when this opportunity came up for me to be a stay-at-home-mum and consider having my own venture, I felt really good about that. I really relished that opportunity. – AP/37

All of the women in this category cited the desire to be physically present and available for their children as their main motivation for becoming self-employed. For some, this was manifested as a reluctance, or outright opposition, to using formal child care (Int. 22, 39). Lucy Kingman (Int. 39), for instance, was particularly outspoken about her desire not to use any form of formal child care until her children were at least three years old. When she became pregnant with her first child, Lucy quit her job as an events manager so that she could “just relax and enjoy” the pregnancy and the early months of motherhood. Her husband, also self-employed, made enough money to cover the family’s expenses, so returning to paid work immediately was not a financial necessity.

A year later, while organising a celebration for her son’s first birthday, Lucy came across a party-planning business that was for sale. Thinking she could make some extra income for the household while enabling her to stay at home with her son, Lucy bought the business and proceeded to re-design it from scratch. The venture quickly grew into
a full-time commitment for both Lucy and her husband, who managed the logistical end of the business through his own transport business. Despite the apparent success of her enterprise, Lucy took particular pains during her interview to emphasise that keeping her children out of child care was her primary motivation for becoming self-employed:

I feel like it's a priority for me. I wouldn't leave my kids in full-time care and work outside the home. I think it's obviously a personal choice; I don't judge anyone who does it. I'm just saying if you're interested in the relationship between children and work-at-home mothers, you'll find that's a big motivator. –LK/39

Asked to elaborate on her feelings about work and motherhood, and why it was so important to her to keep her children out of child care, Lucy explained:

I guess it's that constant paranoia and that constant pressure on women (and on myself) to feel like we're doing everything right. I have to say I've got that. And I always feel like, 'OK, I still want to work and have my own business and be successful, but I don't want that to be at the expense of the kids'.

So I actually believe that children under three should be spending as much time as possible in their home environment, being raised by their parents or their immediate family. That's really important. Just setting the groundwork, I guess, the bonds. In my opinion, no one will care for your child the way that you would.

I mean, I have to say, I'm not judging because I know some people have to go back for financial reasons, but I'm just talking about my own situation. I was lucky enough that I didn't have to. So that was a big thing for me; that I didn't want to— I wouldn't have considered going back to work somewhere outside the home when my kids were so young and I was just starting my family. So it is a major thing for me. –LK/39

Mandy Franklin (Int. 22) also spoke about choosing self-employment to avoid putting her children into formal child care, a position she had been forced to reassess with the growth of her business and the birth of her second child. Mandy had been a primary school teacher for the early part of her career, but was working in an entry-
level marketing role when she became pregnant with her first child. She resigned before the baby arrived, and began looking almost immediately for a business she could run from home. Mandy and her family were not desperate for extra income, but still found it “a bit tight” managing on her husband’s salary. While searching around for business ideas, Mandy discovered a baby feeding product that was not yet available in Australia. At first she toyed with the idea of simply becoming an importer; then she decided to design her own product. Whilst caring for her first baby at home, Mandy figured out how to have her designs manufactured in China. Within two years, she was running a profitable wholesale operation out of her garage, distributing her own unique line of baby products to major retailers across Australia.

Nevertheless, Mandy said her initial motivation in starting the business was not to “build a baby food feeding empire” but to make some extra income from home, while looking after her child. Like Lucy, keeping her daughter out of child care was a primary motivator for Mandy. But the success and rapid growth of the business had forced her to reassess this position:

I went into business so I wouldn’t have to go back to work. When I had one child, I waited until she was two because I thought it was very—[pauses to find the right words] not great to put your kids in day care when they’re too little... Before the business I was a primary school teacher, and before that I was a nursery nurse. So I just know what some day care centres are like. I just feel like no one will love your child as much as you do. If you’re going to have kids, you might as well look after them.

That was my old opinion. Since then I’ve changed my mind on that one. There’s no way I can be in business and look after [my two children]. It just would be impossible to do it. It would be impossible to run the business. It was different when it was a start-up to when it was an established business; there was less demand. When it was just a start-up, when I had one child, it was a lot cruisier [sic]; she would sleep, I would work, just take it easy. Now the work is demanding, as opposed to doing it just because I feel like it. –MF/22
At the time of her interview, Mandy had placed her two daughters, a three-year-old and an eight-month-old, in a family day care centre\(^{14}\) for two days per week. Mandy said she felt that the new arrangement was “a happy medium”, between her desire to keep her children out of full-time, centre-based care, and her ambition to run a successful business. But many aspects of her story suggested that she felt torn between her entrepreneurial drive and her desire to be emotionally and physically present for her children. She spoke at length, for example, of the difficulty of trying to get work done when the children were around, and her frustration at not being able to grow the business as quickly as she would like. These frustrations led to a period of depression, which compelled Mandy to reassess her priorities about work and family:

I’m just trying to be a lot more strict [sic] with myself [about not working with the children around]. I used to do a lot of it with my older daughter, when my work hours weren’t so strict. I would work when she was in day care, but I would also work when she was watching telly, and I’d work when she was having a nap. I’d work all the time in little snippets. That’s just not working out anymore. I just end up doing nothing properly.

Yeah—my attention’s too divided. But actually, it’s more that the kids lose out. Then you just get wracked with guilt because you’re not doing a good enough job with them. And then you have to remind yourself that you have young kids and they’re the most important thing. So just because you’ve got this, that, and the other thing to do with the business—that’s not really the main goal of life is it?

I’ve just completely, sort of, stripped back my ambition, as it were. I know that the business is in early days and it’s kind of a frustrating point because I know it can be so much more than what it is. I’ve got a lot of ambition for what I want to do, and I’ve just decided to strip it right back to the bare minimum just for sanity’s sake, so I can enjoy my family. It’s so easy to get lost in a rolling, ambitious cycle of what you want to happen with the business. Then you just end up miserable because you’re not enjoying your family. – MF/22

\(^{14}\) An accredited home-based child care arrangement in Australia, in which one educator generally cares for a small number of children (www.fdca.com.au).
Lucy also spoke about her ambitions for her business, the time pressures entailed in working from home, and the burden these placed on her family:

It’s so hard to switch off. Ultimately, it’s not going to be a home-based business. But for now, I want it to be—because of my kids. It’s just the fact that you’re on 24 hours. You’re just immersed in it. So even if you go on holiday, you’ve still got your phone with you. You’re answering emails. It’s not like you can just shut down, and go on your holiday and come back four weeks later and pick up where you left off. It’s a sacrifice – in terms of, it’s much harder work [than being an employee]. –LK/39

The experiences of Mandy and Lucy suggest that family-focused motivations can co-exist with substantial profit or growth motivations within a single enterprise. But significant inter-role conflicts can also arise when the success or growth of a business threatens to overwhelm the initial, family-driven motivation for start-up.

4.3 Business as a means to an end

In all five cases, the women intentionally sought out ventures that would allow them to work from home, not necessarily to capitalise on a particular financial opportunity. In every case, the businesses these women established were largely unrelated to their previous careers. Shauna was a student before she started her online retail business; Georgina moved from human resources to proofreading and editing; Mandy was a primary school teacher and a marketing professional before she became a wholesaler; Agnes was a community services worker before she became a virtual assistant; and Lucy moved from events management to selling party supplies. In their narratives, these women spoke of self-employment as a means to an end – the ability to stay at home with their children, not the expression of a traditional linear career:

I have never really considered my work as a career. I know I that a lot of people do, but I think I’ve never really had a strong career sense of, you know, what I wanted to do when I grow up kind of thing. I think some
people just know and that’s what they go for. But I think, especially today, a lot of people don’t have a, ‘I’m doing this and that’s it’. So, it’s never been a real issue for me. –GM/17

For the family-focused entrepreneurs, the type of businesses they ran was less important than the flexibility offered by self-employment: the freedom to work from home while caring for their young children. Like Georgina, who spoke of how she decided to set up her proofreading and editing business after seeing some courses advertised in a catalogue, many of the women in this group described stumbling on their ventures almost by chance (Int. 17, 22, 37, 39). When Agnes decided to leave her community services job to become a virtual personal assistant, for example, she did so almost without any prior research or experience in administrative services:

It was just a very organic process. Like, I didn’t actually research [being a] virtual personal assistant that extensively before coming up with the thought. I just thought to offer my services in a freelance, consulting way and go from there. –AP/37

Although Lucy had worked in event management prior to having her first child, she had no experience selling children’s party supplies, nor did she ever aspire to be her own boss. By her own account, her business came about almost by accident:

It wasn’t really planned, to be honest. I wasn’t seeking— I wasn’t particularly thinking that I wanted to do something or have my own business. I was planning my son’s first birthday and I was just doing some research online. Then I came across this website where they were selling the business and it just kind of clicked from there. I thought, ‘Wow, this would be perfect’. Initially, I thought this would be good, a bit of part-time work while I’m at home with the kids, but it’s kind of taken over my life, really. –LK/39

Mandy was slightly more deliberate in setting up her business, but was similarly surprised by its success. Before she started her wholesale venture, Mandy said she was “constantly thinking” of ways to supplement the family income while she stayed at
home. Initially, her plan was to import a product and sell it, small-scale, via the online auction site, eBay. Once her business began to grow, Mandy's ambitions were stoked:

I just had a very small fry mind; I just wanted a bit of extra cash. Then once I developed the product and got it brought into the country, I just realised that I was getting such great feedback—I just realised that it had a lot more potential. My eyes were opened, and I started wholesaling and set up the website. And it’s grown organically. At first, I didn’t have the big picture; it’s grown along the way...

Yeah, [my goal] really wasn’t to build a baby feeding empire. I’ve sold about 17,000 units so far— that’s in the last couple of years... My plans have grown so much more than that. I’d like to be selling a lot more— even though it sounds like a lot. I’m impressed. I impress myself when I say the number. But it’s nothing compared to what I want to do in the future. – MF/22

For these women, becoming self-employed was not part of a grand career narrative, the realisation of long-held goals, or a reaction to a negative employment situation. Self-employment was a means to an end; enabling them to stay at home with their children, or keep them out of formal, centre-based child care, and to enact a certain ideal of motherhood that involved high levels of physical proximity and emotional availability for their children— even if the demands of business meant that this did not always occur in practice. For the family-focused entrepreneurs, motherhood was the main driver to self-employment, not professional goals or difficulties with previous employers. Job satisfaction, commercial success, and personal ambition were ancillary results or potential unforeseen benefits, but they were not initial drivers.

4.4 Not ‘just a stay-at-home-mum’

Despite their commitment to staying at home with their children, almost all of the women in this group said, without prompting, that they did not believe they could be happy if they were not working for pay (Int. 09, 22, 37, 39). Shauna, for instance,
started her business so that she could stay at home with her infant son, but was ambivalent about the stay-at-home-mother role:

I’m probably in two minds about it really. I’d love to be able to stay home and look after my son probably until he’s ready to go to school, because I don’t really want to miss anything. His development is really important to me. But at the same time, I really need some kind of goal to work towards personally, I need that freedom to sort of study or work myself. I think I go a little stir crazy being at home. – SD/09

Agnes cited mental stimulation and the need for personal growth as motivators for becoming self-employed, but she was quick to qualify that parenting was her first priority and her work as a virtual assistant was, “definitely [her] second job at this point in time”. But staying connected to the world of work and was important for Agnes, who described her decision to become self-employed, in part, as, “honouring the career identity I constructed in myself before I became a parent”. She said:

I didn’t want to become the baby brain and nappy brain, which is quite common when you have a kid. I want to nurture that part of myself: as a worker, as a career woman. So that’s why I did it. – AP/37

For Mandy, starting a business was also about the challenge, and not falling into what she saw as the psychological rut of stay-at-home motherhood:

I do like a challenge. I’m the kind of person that if I have an idea for something, I’m happy to run with it and do it. I wouldn’t just think about it, I’d actually do it. And also [my eldest daughter] was six-months-old when I first started working on this idea. At that stage, you’ve been past your baby bubble. You’re starting to need something in your life other than the baby. So I really did enjoy that start-up process, where I had something to think about and focus on that wasn’t just whether [the baby] was sleeping or not...

I look at some of my friends that are literally just stay-at-home mums and I don’t envy them one bit. I would much rather have the business than not have the business. I look at my little girl, my new baby—that’s obviously caused a lot of the challenges. Of course, I’d much rather – a million times
over – much rather have her than not have her. So it’s just the challenge of trying to make it all work basically. – MF/22

Even Lucy, the most outspoken proponent of home-based, maternal child care, said she never really considered not engaging in some form of paid work:

There’s no way I could be at home five days a week and not work. But at the end of the day, if this opportunity hadn’t come up, maybe I wouldn’t have known otherwise. Knowing myself and knowing my past, all the things that I’ve done in my life and that kind of thing, I cannot imagine myself being at home for those days. I am sure something would have come up.

I’m quite a motivated person and I need that stimulation. So I definitely—Yes, as much as I think it’s really important to have that grounding, the groundwork with the kids and be there in those early years – I mean, obviously, all the years – but the fact of not putting them in all-day care. [Work] is something that is for me, as well as being stimulated and also to do something that doesn’t involve the kids. So yes, they’re both important. – LK/39

4.5 Timing, risk, and pressure

Timing, risk, and pressure were other influences frequently cited by the women in this group as key factors in the transition to self-employment after motherhood. Already working part-time or temporarily out of the workforce, with the financial burden of the household being carried by a spouse or partner, two of these women spoke of early motherhood as the “ideal” time to start a business, especially if the venture involved limited financial risk (Int. 17, 37). These women also spoke about their decision to become self-employed as a family choice; an opportunity to realise a particular set of shared values or goals. For Georgina, for example, starting her own business was a “now or never” decision:

My [second] daughter was probably about nine-months-old when I finished the [proofreading and editing] course. I decided, with my husband, that if I did go back to work part-time I wouldn’t actually be able
to spend the time to start-up my own business. It was kind of a now or never thing. So I made the cut. – GM/17

All five women in this group talked about how being self-employed was harder in many ways than working for someone else. The challenges they cited included: knowing how to recruit new clients and how much to charge for their work; forgoing paid annual and sick leave; trying to manage work and domestic responsibilities in the same physical sphere; and never being able to switch off from the demands of the business. Georgina and Shauna spoke at some length about the difficulty of knowing how to recruit new clients, and having the confidence and experience to know how much to charge for their services. The two more established business operators, Mandy and Lucy, both spoke about their work as a never-ending avalanche of responsibilities, compounded by the work that generally fell to them as keepers of their domestic spheres as well. Mandy, who was active in many mothers-in-business and ‘mumpreneur’ networking groups, said she encountered many stay-at-home mothers who talked about starting their own businesses without realising the additional burdens it brings:

I think it is amazing having the opportunity to work from home but I think probably the biggest thing to be wary of – which I’d tell any mother – is your mental health. That’s the underpinning theme to the whole family and how everything’s going to work.

On the outside it looks so cruise-y [sic]. Yeah. I reckon people just get the wrong idea, they think it is easy working from home... Like my Dad, for example, he works for himself, but he used to go to work and work for himself. He didn’t have to look after us kids while he was working. – MF/22
4.6 Willingness to return to organisational employment

The family-focused entrepreneurs were mixed on the question of whether they would consider returning to work as an employee in an organisational context, with flexibility, autonomy, and financial stability emerging as the major themes. All of the family-focused entrepreneurs were wholly self-employed (i.e. not supplementing their income with full-time, part-time, or casual employment). Presented with the question “Would you ever consider working for someone else (as an employee) instead of being self-employed?” three of the women in this group said, ‘Yes’, and two said they were, ‘Not Sure’. Those who answered affirmatively were less established in business, and said they would consider returning to organisational employment when their children were older (e.g. entering primary school) or if the business was not viable on its own (Int. 17, 37). The two ‘Not Sure’ responses came from the more established business operators (Int. 22, 29), who said they would not eagerly rush back into organisational employment unless they were lured by a very exciting – and flexible – opportunity.

Among the participants who said they would consider returning to organisational employment, the responses revolved mainly around finances and business viability. For example: “It is easier working for someone else” (Int. 09), or “If my virtual private assistant business is not as lucrative as I anticipate, I will seek part-time employment” (Int. 37), or “I am considering contracting my services to others to promote my business whilst I continue to network” (Int. 47).

4.7 Conclusion

The five women in this category cited predominantly family motivations for becoming self-employed, and shared a family-focused orientation to work and family.
For the *family-focused entrepreneurs*, the decision to become self-employed was tied directly and explicitly to their identities as mothers. The women in this group were united in their desire to enact a certain idealised vision of motherhood, characterised by a high degree of maternal involvement, both physical and emotional. All of the women in this group cited their desire to stay at home with their young children, at least in their preschool years, as a primary driver. In two cases, this desire was backed (at least initially) by a philosophical opposition to using formal child care, particularly centre-based child care. In this respect, the *family-focused entrepreneurs* largely embodied Ekinsmyth’s (2013a, 2013b) definition of ‘mumpreneurs’ in that they had consciously and deliberately configured their businesses around their children. At least three of the women in this group volunteered to participate in the study after seeing advertisements posted on the social media pages of self-described ‘mumpreneur’ networking groups.

The women in this group started their business as a way to make money from home, to supplement the family income and provide extra niceties (such as holidays and extracurricular activities for children). They did not become self-employed to pursue specific financial or business-related opportunities, or to fulfil specific career ambitions. Indeed, all of the women in this group started businesses that were largely unrelated to their previous employment (Int. 09, 17, 22, 37, 39). Although they were not initially driven to self-employment by career motives, two of the women in this group developed professional ambitions with the growth of their businesses (Int. 22, 39). Nevertheless, despite their family-focused motivations, nearly all of the women in this group spoke about the importance of paid work and cultivating a professional identity beyond motherhood (Int. 09, 22, 37, 39), although this sometimes resulted in feelings of personal guilt or conflict (Int. 22, 39). These findings are further discussed in Chapter 8.
Chapter Five:

Career-Focused Entrepreneurs

5.1 Introduction

Of the 60 women interviewed for this study, only four participants – or seven percent of the sample – had self-employment narratives that revolved primarily around career or financial motivations. Although these career-focused entrepreneurs started their businesses after becoming pregnant or having children, their self-employment motivations were largely unrelated to their family responsibilities. All of the women in this group were highly educated professionals who had started their businesses to advance their careers, pursue unique opportunities, make more money, or attain greater professional status. In every case, the businesses these women started were an extension of their former careers, and the decision to become self-employed was a deliberate, carefully considered strategy. Although they did not cite their children or families as primary motivators for becoming self-employed, family dynamics were still important to the career-focused entrepreneurs, who described flexibility and autonomy over working hours as the chief benefits of being self-employed.\(^\text{15}\)

The four women in this group were between the ages of 24 and 54, and all married or living with a domestic partner. All of the women in this group were high

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\(^{15}\) It is possible that the selection criteria for women in this study – i.e. women who became self-employed after motherhood – may not have attracted as many female entrepreneurs with career-focused motivations as a differently designed study. However, as discussed in Chapter Three, substantial efforts were made to attract women from generic 'women in business' networking groups, in addition to networking groups aimed specifically at working mothers or 'mumpreneurs'. It is also possible, that women with children are simply more likely to report predominance of family-related motives for start-up, as has been suggested by Kirkwood (2009) and Dawson and Henley (2012). These findings are discussed in Chapter Two.
income earners, reporting gross personal incomes of AUD$2000 or more per week; either the higher income earner in their households (Int. 01, 08, 16) or earning roughly the same as their partner or spouse (Int. 46). The length of time these women had been self-employed varied considerably, from fewer than 12 months (Int. 16) to between 10 and 15 years (Int. 01; 08). Table 5.1 provides an overview of the career-focused entrepreneurs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int.</th>
<th>Name#</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. Children</th>
<th>Age of Youngest Child</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Type of Business</th>
<th>Business Duration</th>
<th>Income (AUD/wk)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Pauline Heatherton</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>M*</td>
<td>Property Consultant</td>
<td>10&gt;15yrs</td>
<td>2000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Katrina Miller</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>M*</td>
<td>Nutrition Consultant</td>
<td>10&gt;15yrs</td>
<td>2000++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Penny Butler-Evans</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>M*</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>&gt;12m</td>
<td>2000+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Lola Chen</td>
<td>24-35</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>1&gt;3 yrs</td>
<td>2000+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Participants’ names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.
* Highest income earner in the household, by marital status.
** Uses regular employment (full-time, part-time, or casual) to supplement business income.

The individual circumstances in which these women left organisational employment to start their own businesses varied considerably, but the reasons they cited for becoming self-employed fell into three broad categories: 1) the desire for independence, autonomy, or control over their work; 2) the possibility of financial benefit, or the desire for greater financial control; and 3) the opportunity to achieve greater professional status.

The career-focused entrepreneurs were unique among the women in this study in that they did not express an alteration in their priorities away from their careers post-motherhood. Instead, they were more likely to observe that motherhood had changed the way they approached their work (e.g. how they handled their time, the types of
clients they were willing to engage, or which projects they wanted to do), but their work remained a central focus of their lives. *The career-focused entrepreneurs* were also unique among the women in the study in that they did *not* share a preference for part-time or flexible work, although the flexibility of self-employment (particularly with respect to their children) was frequently cited as a secondary benefit. The remainder of this section highlights the shared characteristics of the *career-focused entrepreneurs*, drawing on examples from the participants’ personal accounts.

### 5.2 Autonomy over work

The desire for independence, autonomy, and control over their work was a key driver for the women in this group, personified by Pauline Heatherton (Int. 01). In the decade before she started her own business, Pauline had built a thriving career as a senior executive for a multinational property developer, flying around the world, negotiating multimillion dollar deals on behalf of her clients. The long hours and frequent travel meant that she sometimes went several days – up to sixteen weeks on one occasion – without seeing her husband or young son. But when asked why she decided to become self-employed, Pauline cited disagreements with company management and the desire for control over her work as her primary motivators. Although the long hours and frequent travel took a personal toll, Pauline said her move was spurred, in part, by dissatisfaction with the management of her former company. But rather than look for another role in a different organisation, Pauline chose self-employment as a way to control her own professional ‘destiny’:

> Basically what prompted me was a change in management at the corporate that I was working with. I didn’t like the direction the company was heading in, and therefore, I made a conscious decision to not work for somebody else and to work for myself...
I wanted to be more in control of my own destiny, and have the flexibility to be able to choose the people that I wanted to work with rather than working with people that chose me. But the real sense of purpose to me was, to actually—and not to sound crass, but to work with people I enjoy rather than working with idiots. – PH/01

Pauline decided that the only way to gain control over her work and achieve what she wanted from her career was to start her own business. For Pauline, this extended beyond just choosing her own projects and her own clients, but also the structure and organisation of her business. She threw herself full-time into her new business, but never considered taking on employees or building the business beyond a size she could manage on her own. Containing the size of her business was a deliberate strategy to retain maximum control over her work, without accountability to anyone else—employer or employee. Being the sole-proprietor of her own small consultancy allowed Pauline to preserve her sense of independence, both by relieving herself of the obligations she felt as an employee, but also any potential obligations she might feel as an employer:

I wanted to make sure that whatever direction I was going to head in that I was solely in control of it... I consciously decided that I didn't want to build an empire. I just wanted to keep myself busy and be a sole trader... I made a conscious decision just to keep myself employed—to use contractors in terms of graphics, copywriters—an individual supply of people that best suited the requirements at the time rather than building a team that I needed to then feed.

I didn’t want somebody else that I was, you know, responsible for, to put me in a position where it was, ‘Oh no, you can’t go to that because you have to work, or you have to do this’, whereas if it’s just yourself, you can make that decision by yourself. And you then choose your own destiny, the control of what you have going forward. – PH/01

The desire for control was also a prime motivator for Penny Butler-Evans (Int. 16), who was working full-time as an architect for a firm when she decided to start her
own business. Her two young children were being looked after by her work-at-home husband, and Penny saw an opportunity to use her specialised expertise as an architect in the medical field to take on more interesting, better quality projects than her previous employer was able to offer. After a lengthy conversation about her work history, which had included two maternity leaves and periods of both full- and part-time work, Penny took pains to stress that her reason for becoming self-employed was unrelated to her family or household circumstances. Asked why she started her own business when she did, Penny replied:

Funnily enough, it didn’t have anything to do with the kids. It was actually because I was finding that what I wanted to do was work on a range of projects, whereas the company I was with were only winning a certain amount of work. So what I wanted to do was select the type of projects I worked on, rather than the company I was working for.

Because there were lots of jobs around, but the company I was with wasn’t necessarily winning a lot of those jobs... And while I was selecting some of the projects I wanted to work on – the juiciest jobs I guess – I saw an opportunity for me to consult to different companies selecting the projects I wanted to work on, rather than being given projects. – PBE/16

Professional autonomy was cited as a prime motivator by all three of the career-focused entrepreneurs who created new businesses (Int. 01, 08, 16), rather than investing in or expanding an existing one (Int. 46). For these women, running their own businesses gave them control over the types and quality of work they did. Self-employment also offered possibilities for financial and professional success beyond being an employee, which are outlined in the next section.

5.3 Financial security and professional status

The ability to make more money, and thereby increase their financial security or professional status, was cited by two of the women in this group (Int. 08, 46). Lola Chen
had been working as a senior executive in the firm when her first child was born. Around this time, Lola was invited to become a partner in the firm, a process that involved investing more than AUD$100,000 in her personal savings into the business. In her retelling, the decision to become a part-owner of the business marked a significant advancement in Lola’s career, and a boost for her professional identity:

It’s a rare opportunity to basically be made a partner; a very, very rare opportunity. It’s not like a listed company where you get to buy in any time you like... Basically, being a business owner, it’s long-term for you. You don’t necessarily make the money today. As an employee you get paid for what you do today, whereas with the business owner you don’t. I guess being the boss is a bit of an ego boost in a way—that I have the status. – LC/46

For Katrina Miller (Int. 8), the move to self-employment was based on a desire to make more money, and take control of her financial future, a decision that was triggered, in part, by insecurity within her former job. As an academic researcher, Katrina felt frustrated by the lack of long-term security provided in a working environment where her employment was tied to her ability to secure grants. Rather than seek out other forms of employment, Katrina deliberately chose self-employment as a way to take control over her financial future:

The institute where I worked made it explicitly clear that if we didn’t get our grants or fellowships, then the institute would not be supporting us to stay, and we would have to go and find work elsewhere. So that really precipitated me to look for an option that I felt was more secure; that I felt I would be more in control of.

With business, I still do feel and I did feel then that it gave me a greater sense of financial control, because if I want more money I just go out and get it. I felt a sense of control. So that was a main reason. – KM/08

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16 As stated in Chapter Two, the inclusive definition employed by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), which is used in the present study, includes “the expansion of an existing business” as entrepreneurial activity (Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros 2011).
At the time of her interview, Katrina had returned to full-time employment, working for a different research institute under a new grant. But she continued to run her business in her spare time – working well above 50-hours per week with two school-aged children – to keep her income flow steady. Even as an employee, Katrina still saw self-employment as a source of professional autonomy and financial security.

Whether they were driven by professional opportunity (Int. 01, 16), financial security, or professional status (Int. 08, 46), the decision to become self-employed was a deliberate, carefully considered career strategy on the part of these women. Although the decision was sometimes triggered by negative factors, such as job dissatisfaction or financial insecurity, the women in this group regarded self-employment as a proactive, positive step to realise their career-related goals.

5.4 Flexibility as a secondary benefit

The career-focused entrepreneurs were united in their professional ambitions. Unlike many of the other women in this study, who spoke of the ways in which motherhood had altered their priorities with respect to work and family, the women in this group did not curtail their professional ambitions after the birth of their children. With the exception of Penny Butler-Evans, who had consciously limited her hours to between 20-24 hours per week, all of the women in this group were working greater than full-time hours. Nevertheless, within those long hours, almost all of the women in the study spoke about the flexibility and autonomy offered by self-employment. But the ability to be more flexible around their children’s needs – to attend school concerts or sporting events, or to stay at home with sick children – were secondary benefits of self-employment, not primary motivators. The career-focused entrepreneurs were unique
among the women in this study in that they expressed little reservation about working long full-time hours, using child care, or relying on stay-at-home husbands or nannies for primary child care. Lola, for example, started working from home one day per week when her baby was six weeks old, and then returned to full-time work when he was six months old. She spoke unreservedly about her passion for her work:

Look, I love what I'm doing, the only reason why I only worked one day a week for so long is because childcare was an issue. I couldn't find childcare and I was breastfeeding the baby so it's not like I can put him on a bottle within 24 hours, things don't work that way. It was those kinds of things that were holding me back. I've always loved what I'm doing so there's really no hesitancy for me to go back into full-time work as long as I know the baby is being looked after well. – LC/46

Penny, the sole career-focused entrepreneur working fewer than full-time hours, said she would not hesitate to return to full-time work for the right project:

For the most part, I'm selecting to do around 24 hours a week. And that was just a conscious decision about how much I wanted to work. I'd been working my butt off for the previous two years and just needed a bit of quiet time. And so I just kind of wanted to build up to more hours, but it kind of full into three days per week, split over the week. It just seemed to work in terms of the work, what I was doing with the kids and what [else] was going on... If a particularly nice project comes along, then I would work full time on it. I guess I’m in a lucky position where my husband has been the primary carer for a long time, so I’m not concerned about that. Working part-time has just actually been a bonus. – PBE/16

For others, self-employment required more work and longer hours than being an employee, but the intellectual stimulation and personal freedoms offered by self-employment were worth the trade-off. Although none of the career-focused entrepreneurs ascribed specific family-related motives to their decision to become self-employed, closer examination of their narratives suggests that family or household dynamics were nevertheless important considerations. Katrina Miller (Int. 08) described the trade-offs like this:
With the business what happened is, yes I worked all the time, I worked probably much harder than if I’d just stayed in a job. But the difference was that I fixed those hours to suit my family, so now for example I pick up my kids from school, like I’m home when they come home from school, a couple of times a week. Or when I was doing the business, I would be home when they came home. I had flexibility to go to the Easter Parade or school concerts or the school fete. I had no one being disapproving and saying, ‘Uh, you know, you’re spending too much time away from your work, you should get your priorities right’. So, I did really feel that freedom, I felt intellectual stimulation and I did feel total absolute freedom in when and how I worked. – KM/08

Similarly, Pauline Heatherton (Int. 01) said that being her own boss had allowed her to be upfront with her clients about her family commitments in a way she could not be when she was travelling for weeks at a time as an executive-level employee.

Although she did not become self-employed expressly for the added flexibility, it was a welcome benefit:

Because I only have one child, he tends to be quite a focus for me. So I’ve always been open about that. But, you know, I’ve never been out of contact from clients. So I don’t just simply say I’m going to a meeting. I do actually say, ‘My son’s got a carnival on’, or, ‘My son’s performing in a play’. My clients know that if there’s an emergency or something that needs to be done, I’ll work day and night or over the weekend in order to get it done based on that deadline. So again, that allows me the flexibility to know that I meet what their requirements are. But I can also take that time when I need it. – PH/01

5.5 Willingness to return to organisational employment

The career-focused entrepreneurs were generally mixed on the question of whether they would consider returning to work as an employee in an organisational context, with flexibility, autonomy, financial stability, and stress emerging as the major themes. At the time they complete the questionnaire, three of the women in this group were wholly self-employed (i.e. not supplementing their incomes with full-time, part-time, or casual employment). Presented with the question “Would you ever consider
working for someone else (as an employee) instead of being self-employed?” one woman in this group answered, “Yes”; two others said they were “Not Sure”.

The fourth member of this group, Katrina Miller, had already returned to full-time employment for a large research institute, and was not asked this question in the questionnaire. However, during her interview she spoke of how she continued to run her business as her main, and most reliable, source of income. For her, the financial motivation that lured her into self-employment was not sufficient to keep her in business over the long run. She opted to return to organisational employment only after securing a role that offered the same level of challenge, flexibility, and autonomy she had enjoyed while being wholly self-employed:

The primary driver for starting the business was financial. And business was a way of having that financial backup, while also having freedom and intellectual stimulation. And I as I did the business, I realised there was a certain emptiness, in a way, because it was made to produce money. I felt that wasn't enough. And I realised that my true love was research.

So I moved back into an institute where I felt there was a much more flexible attitude toward working women. So for example, where I am working now, I work from home, like most of the time. No one cares whether I’m in or not. Nobody is looking at the clock. Nobody is watching my hours... I have total flexibility in when and how I work. So that has made a huge difference. – KM/08

This sentiment was echoed by Pauline Heatherton (Int. 01), who cited autonomy and flexibility as primary impediments to returning to organisational employment. Asked whether she would ever consider working for someone else (as an employee) instead of being self-employed, Pauline said she was unsure, as it would be “difficult to go back into an employee role after having the autonomy and flexibility around running my own business”. Penny Butler-Evans (Int. 16) also said she was unsure, citing financial reasons, which were echoed by Lola Chen (Int. 46), who said she would
consider it. In the open-ended portion of the questionnaire, Lola said that returning to organisational employment would be “less stressful” than being a partner in a medium sized firm with several dozen employees. Still in the early stages of business start-up, Lola had not yet begun to realise the financial benefits of entrepreneurship that was one of her primary motivators. These responses suggests that some individuals trade off certain undesirable elements of self-employment (e.g. stress) for potential benefits (e.g. financial rewards, autonomy, flexibility) in deciding between organisational employment and self-employment.

5.6 Conclusion

All four women in this category were highly educated, high-earning professional women who actively and deliberately chose self-employment over other types of employment to advance their professional goals, take control over their work, make more money, or achieve greater professional status. Their individual circumstances were varied and complex, but all of the women in this group described the transition to self-employment as a carefully crafted strategy to achieve certain goals. Although they did not ascribe family-focused motivations to their start-up decisions, closer examination of their narratives suggest that household dynamics nevertheless played an important role in the way the career-focused entrepreneurs organised their businesses, with flexibility and autonomy emerging as the major benefits of self-employment for these women.
Chapter Six:

Opt-In Entrepreneurs

6.1 Introduction

Sixteen women in the study, or 27 percent of the sample, chose self-employment voluntarily to pursue interesting, meaningful work while retaining maximum flexibility to accommodate their children’s schedules. These opt-in entrepreneurs spoke about self-employment as a choice they made willingly, without regrets. But unlike the career-focused entrepreneurs, who were driven primarily by career or financial goals, or the family-focused entrepreneurs, whose primary objective was to stay at home with their children and supplement their household incomes, the opt-in entrepreneurs were drawn to self-employment by a combination of work and family motives.

The women in this group spoke passionately about the importance of their paid work, both personally and professionally, but felt strongly that their career ambitions should be organised around their family lives, rather than vice versa. They saw self-employment as a way to create a rewarding professional life that would enable them to work around their children’s daily schedules, rather than forcing their children to bend to them. For some, self-employment was a temporary strategy while their children were young, when they preferred not to work full-time outside the home; others had become attached to self-employment more permanently because of perceived lifestyle benefits. All were united in the desire for control, at least hypothetically, over their time and their work.
There was considerable variation in the circumstances of the 16 women in this group. Three-quarters of the women were married or living with a domestic partner (n=12); one-quarter were lone parents\(^{17}\), living alone or with extended family (n=4). Two of the married women were primary breadwinners in their households, compared to three of the four who were lone mothers. The women’s duration in self-employment ranged from nascent entrepreneurs with fewer than 6 months’ experience (n=3) to experienced businesswomen with up to 15 years’ experience (n=2). The most common response was between one and three years’ experience (n=6). Most of the women in this group were working exclusively in their own businesses, but three of the respondents were using regular employment (full-time, part-time, or casual) to supplement their incomes or ease their transition into self-employment. The number of hours the women in this group worked in their businesses was varied, with five women working fewer than 19 hours per week on their businesses, five women working 20-34 hours per week, and six women working 35 hours per week or more in their businesses. Other characteristics of the opt-in entrepreneurs are illustrated in Table 6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int.</th>
<th>Name#</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. Children</th>
<th>Age of Youngest Child</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Type of Business</th>
<th>Business Duration</th>
<th>Income (AUD/wk)</th>
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<td>Kylie Roberts</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Medical professional</td>
<td>1&gt;3yrs</td>
<td>400-599**</td>
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<td>06</td>
<td>Angie Burkett</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Market Researcher</td>
<td>10&gt;15yrs</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Wedding Planner</td>
<td>3&gt;5yrs</td>
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<td>Anna Sanderson</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Marketing Consultant</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>PR Consultant</td>
<td>1&gt;3yrs</td>
<td>400-599</td>
</tr>
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</table>

\(^{17}\) The term used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for single or sole-parents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Employment Type</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Income Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Claudia Giorio</td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Health Educator</td>
<td>&gt;6m</td>
<td>600-799**</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Krista Bechtel</td>
<td>25-34</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>&gt;6m</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Marnie Jaffe</td>
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<td>S*</td>
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<td>1&gt;3yrs</td>
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<td>PR Consultant</td>
<td>&gt;6m</td>
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# Participants’ names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.
* Highest income earner in the household, by marital status.
** Uses regular employment (full-time, part-time, or casual) to supplement business income.

There was significant variation in the characteristics of the women in this group and the circumstances that brought them to self-employment. But the similarities in their narratives suggest that the decision to become self-employed was influenced by four key factors: first, a rebalancing of priorities after motherhood; second, a desire to avoid or escape the obligations inherent in organisational employment; third, a desire for autonomy over one’s time and work; and fourth, timing and financial risk. The remainder of the chapter analyses these themes, drawing on examples from the participants’ narratives.
6.2 Changed priorities after motherhood

Every woman in this group expressed the idea that motherhood had fundamentally altered her vision of her career, and the extent to which she was prepared to submit to the restrictions or demands of an employer. The opt-in entrepreneurs were united by a common desire to work fewer than full-time hours, or to fit-full time working hours around their children's daily schedules. These women felt that organisational employment demanded sacrifices they were unwilling to make. They took pains to stress that the needs of their children were paramount, but their careers were still important too. Kylie Roberts (Int. 03), a medical specialist with a doctorate and two young children, explained her perspective this way:

It’s all about the kids now. It’s not really about me. If I make decisions, it’s not that I have to put them first and I’m secondary. I think it’s still important to pursue what interests you, because that’s important for [the children] to see. But it’s more about them, you know, like making sure that I’m not compromising them in any way before I do anything. Whereas before, it was just me, I’d be powering forward, trying to do all that major career advancement sort of stuff. – KR/03

For Kylie, limiting her private medical practice to one day per week was a deliberate strategy to stay connected to her career while maintaining the flexibility to meet the daily, ongoing – sometimes unexpected – needs of her children:

I certainly don’t want to de-skill while waiting several more years until I’m more reliable. So at the moment, I can only really handle one day a week because, you know, for example, my daughter vomited all last night and I’ve had about 45 minutes’ sleep, and I had to see a host of patients. But at least the business keeps me fairly fresh to balance between what I’m capable of if the kids get sick versus, you know, what I’d like to be doing ... I’m doing it [the business] for me, but I’d be doing more of it if I didn’t have kids. – KR/03

Some experienced this shifting of priorities as a surprise, or shock. Others, like Krista Bechtel (Int. 28), an architect with one small child, always knew they wanted
careers that could accommodate their families. Krista resigned from her job while on maternity leave, and began building up a freelance clientele almost immediately. To Krista, being an employee – even in a part-time, flexible working arrangement – was the second best option:

My vision of my career always involved a family. So having a family was always more important than having a career for me. So for me, my career had to fit around the family. And that was always the plan. This was the plan that I hoped would work out – you know, if I can get a business running for myself that earns a good income. Then that’s the best solution, if I can work from home. That was always what I hoped would work out the best.

Looking for another part-time job was the second-best option. I always wanted to have my own business and work for myself. So if I could make that work, then that could be the best result. And then if things got quiet and we really needed money, then I would go and find a part-time job. But I did not want to do that because I find that in my industry, if you are not there every day, the employers are reluctant to give you worthwhile things to do because you don’t follow it day-to-day. If you are only there a couple of days they will give you less interesting jobs to work on, that aren’t as rewarding as being involved in a big team project – KB/28

Nine of the women in this group chose self-employment expressly because they perceived that the obligations implicit in organisational employment were incompatible with their ideals of motherhood (Int. 13, 14, 18, 36, 48, 51, 52, 55, 56). For Nina Thomas (Int. 36), a former project manager in the information technology and banking sectors, having the freedom to spend time with her children was “a really big, important thing” and not possible in her former role. She decided to opt into self-employment after watching other mothers in her sector attempt to juggle the load:

I always knew because I had kids, I didn’t want to go back to working for someone else again. I always wanted to do my own business. And everyone kept saying, ‘Aren’t you going to work for someone?’ And I was going, ‘No!’ because I wanted the freedom to be able to spend time with the kids. That was a really big important thing.
And I knew that when I had been in corporate, I saw other mothers working—they were just working massively long hours and putting their kids into care all the time, and it wasn’t something I wanted to do… Because I had seen what it was like. I know the sacrifices. When you’ve got a project that has to be delivered and you’ve got clients who are waiting for the project to be delivered on time and it means you’ve got to work 24-hours a day, you’ve got to do it. You just can’t do that with children. – NT/36

This sentiment was echoed by Anna Sanderson (Int. 14), a marketing professional with two small children, who made her decision to become self-employed after watching other women try, and fail, to negotiate part-time careers in the advertising industry with their family responsibilities:

Knowing what it’s like being in an advertising agency, you don't have any control. Even when you’re quite senior, you don’t have any control over your hours. I’ve had friends when I worked there who’ve had children and gone back part-time three or four days and I didn’t think it worked. Most of them had left within a year because it just wasn’t working out with their commitments to their children. And the agency wasn’t happy with the amount of work they were able to put in, or their focus. And I just knew from having seen that, that it wasn’t a long-term strategy for me to try and juggle. – AS/14

Like Nina and Anna, most of the opt-in entrepreneurs foresaw the potential clash between their motherhood goals and the demands of organisational employment and jumped out before any actual conflicts arose (Int. 03, 06, 13, 14, 28, 36, 48, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56). Two women in this group tried working part-time and then opted for self-employment later on (Int. 18, 55); two others were in transition from part-time to wholly self-employed (Int. 19, 31).

Joann Kearney (Int. 18) was among the few who tried to go back to organisational employment after motherhood. After the birth of her second child, she negotiated a part-time role as a senior manager in the public service, working a 30-hour week. But she quickly felt overwhelmed by the logistical hassle of getting two children
ready and dropped off at childcare, while managing what she felt was a full-time job in four days. She tried to juggle this arrangement for 18 months after the birth of her second child before resigning to set up her own public relations consultancy. When asked to explain why she decided to become self-employed, Joann blamed the pressures of parenthood and the pressures of the job in equal measure. But ultimately, she said, her sense of attachment to her career had shifted; the compromises necessary to succeed in her previous role no longer seemed worthwhile:

I didn't have my first child until I was 36, and my second when I was 40, so I was very career-orientated for a long time. And then, when you have kids, it just doesn't seem quite so important. Or it didn’t for me. Your priorities change when you become a parent. I mean, I probably would have loved the job 10 years ago, maybe, before I had kids when I could [pauses]—I explain it to people sometimes that it was a full-time job that needed someone that could do more than full-time hours to keep on top of it. I made a conscious decision at one stage not to check emails and not answer work phone calls at home, and I just kept getting further and further behind, because the job couldn't be done without that...

And, you know, I was quite senior, kind of one rung below executive [pay level]. But you’re not really allowed to make any decisions in the public sector unless you’re at the executive level. But I would look at the executives and what they had to give up – including my boss who had two young children herself – and I didn’t really want to be there. And I was like, ‘Well, what am I doing here if I don’t want to be there?’ – JK/18

6.3 Locked in: the obligations of organisational employment

Nina, Anna, Joann, and several other opt-in entrepreneurs felt that organisational employment entailed implicit sacrifices they were unwilling to make. Not every woman in this group expressed this view, but those who did were particularly strident in the language they used, likening organisational employment to prison (e.g. “being locked in” – Int. 13, 48) or indentured servitude (e.g. “being owned” – Int. 51; or “sell my soul” – Int. 13). Christine Webb, for example, (Int. 48) spent 12 months working as an employee
after an extended period running her own business as a virtual private assistant. She found the schedule demands and rigid working environment intolerable and quickly started another venture, this time providing advice to small business owners.

Describing her experience as an employee she said:

I hated being locked into those set hours. I’m just so used to the freedom of running my own business now, and doing what I want that I could never go back to working for somebody else. To do what I want to do in my own business. I don’t have to consult anybody or say, ‘Do you want to do this?’ If I want to do it, I just do it. – CW/48

Lauren Holloway (Int. 51), a lone mother and contract-based worker for a community organisation, was particularly strident about the compromises implicit in organisational employment. Lauren said she would never consider returning to work as a salaried employee, even though, for her, self-employment meant considerable financial insecurity:

I’m personally not very good at being owned, or feeling like I’m being owned, by anyone or any organisation, where I have to ask for permission to have a day off or feel guilty if I’m not feeling well or where somebody else gets to decide when I can have holidays and when I can’t and what hours I have to work. I’m not very good in that kind of environment, so this kind of environment suits me much better where I have been given the trust—because I’ve earned it. I have the authority over my own life.

I won’t prostitute myself for my job. So for me, a corporate role would mean that the job has to come first and my family – my child – would have to fit into the hours that are left over. That just does not fit well in my values. – LH/51

The opt-in entrepreneurs spoke about self-employment as a way of taking control over their lives, and reordering their commitments in favour of their changed priorities. Priya Patel (Int. 55) spoke at length about the control she gained over her personal life when she left her job as a chartered accountant to become a personal career coach.

Although she had negotiated a part-time work arrangement, Priya cited the feelings of
pressure and obligation she felt as an employee as her main motives in becoming self-employed:

It’s really about not having that stressful ‘pushing the kids out the door because I’ve got to get to the city at nine’ lifestyle. Although I had arranged flexible time and all that, there was still an obligation. For me, I like to commit to whatever I’m doing, so I would want to do that to the best of my ability. Trying to get into the city, and then try and get home to pick them up from childcare— It was long days for them as well, for the children. It tipped the balance for me.

Even though I was only working those three days, it tipped the balance and I wasn’t enjoying it. I thought, ‘This isn’t the life that I want for my children’. And I don’t want to be pushing them out the door each morning and creating that stressful environment; whereas now it’s just so much more relaxed. I can choose my own hours, which I do. I very much balance my workload. I don’t take on too many clients [because] I have to balance with my children very effectively. It’s all within my control now. – PP/55

Seven of the 16 women in the opt-in group ended up working more than 35 hours per week in their businesses (Int. 13, 31, 48, 51, 52, 53, 54). But for them, having control, or the illusion of control, over their own time and how they directed their energies was a crucial difference between choosing to work long hours for themselves and being ‘locked in’ to working long hours for someone else.

6.4 The importance of control

The opt-in entrepreneurs were motivated by a shared desire to have autonomy or control over their personal and professional lives. The concept of control revolved around several areas: wanting to be available for their children or families (n=16); the desire for greater job satisfaction (n=12); gaining a sense of psychological control over their lives or enjoying a better lifestyle (n=10); or to gain a financial benefit (n=8).
Each of the *opt-in entrepreneur* narratives contained some combination of these factors to varying degrees, but Angie Burkett (Int. 06), a market research consultant, expressed them all. Angie had originally planned to return to work full-time when her first child was just three months old. But after a few weeks at home with the baby, she decided that it would be easier, and less complicated, to work from home. Describing herself as a 'life-styler', Angie outlined the following reasons for choosing to start her own business:

I can potentially make more money and work less. I have greater flexibility. And the working less, I guess, extends to being able to spend more time on the housework and the kids. And also have more holidays, which was particularly relevant when the kids started school and you have all those long school holidays. And also I get more job satisfaction. There's a sense that you have more control over your work flows, the types of clients and the type of work that you take on. In reality, that’s not quite the case, but you still kind of psychologically feel like you have a bit more of a sense of control. And if you choose, if you want to work really hard, you kind of reap the rewards; whereas if you work really hard as an employee, you don’t get paid any extra usually. – AB/06

The *opt-in entrepreneurs* were unanimous in their desire to fit their working lives around their children’s schedules – to be available for school pickups and drop-offs; to be free to attend concerts or sporting events; to be flexible around school holidays; or to stay at home with a sick child. Those with younger children expressed a desire to limit the time their children spent being cared for outside the home, although they had fewer blanket reservations to using formal child care than the *family-focused entrepreneurs*. Marnie Jaffe (Int. 31), a lone mother setting up her own photography business while working part-time as a house cleaner, said the desire to be present in her daughter’s life was a key element in her self-employment transition:
I think there is that definite thing of being in a position to organise your own time around the child and school pick up and all that sort of thing. I don't want to be an absent parent. To me, that's very important—particularly pre-teenage years. I'd like to be there as much as I could for her, dropping her off to school and picking her up and getting her dinner. I don't want someone else doing that. So yeah, it's definitely the flexibility to work around being a parent. It's huge—a huge motivator to set up your own business. It has been for me. – MJ/31

Similarly, Melissa Smith (Int. 56) said she left her nursing career, as well as a short stint working in the television industry, because she found it impossible to balance the long hours and shift work required in both industries against the demands of being a lone parent. Summarising her reasons for starting her public relations consultancy, Melissa said:

I think number one as a parent, the most important thing, is fitting in around the child. Making sure my child's needs, emotional and physical wellbeing—those needs are being met. That's number one to me. – MS/56

Having a more autonomous lifestyle was another key motivator for the women in this group. Apart from the stress of having to push the children out the door each morning, several women talked about the burden of having to dress up for work, leave their homes and sit an office where they were made to account for every minute of their days. Krista Bechtel (Int. 28), the architect who always knew she wanted a career that could work around her family, said she decided to try freelancing after seeing the lifestyle her self-employed husband enjoyed:

My husband works for himself, so I have seen how much better the lifestyle is when you are working for yourself ... He has been running his business for quite a few years now, and he has a very flexible lifestyle. So that was really appealing to me because, before I had my son, I would be stuck in the city all day, every day. And if he got all his work done and had a quiet afternoon, he could take his boat for a drive or whatever. So that was a very appealing lifestyle that I was keen to get myself into, if I could make it work...
Working for an employer, you are stuck there for the whole time. So if you are working from 8:30am to 5:30pm, you’ve got to be there from 8:30am to 5:30pm. Whereas I was working for myself, if I only need to do a few hours’ work that day, I can do what I like for the rest of the day and there is nobody sitting there telling me that I have to stay. – KB/28

Apart from having control over their time, many opt-in entrepreneurs felt that self-employment gave them control over type and quality of their work as well. Embedded in this was a rejection of the traditional career, characterised by a series of linear advancements within a single field. Rather, the women in this group were motivated by a desire for work that was personally satisfying, meaningful, interesting, and rewarding. The women spoke about the importance of continuing to learn and grow, or to feel that their work contributed to society in some way. The desire for meaning and personal fulfilment was a primary driver for Marnie Jaffe (Int. 31), the photographer who also spoke about the importance of being available for her school-aged daughter. In her self-employment narrative, Marnie described how she felt her circumstances as a lone mother with no family support had compelled her to take a series of low paid, low-skilled jobs. As she approached her fortieth birthday, Marnie enrolled herself in a small business course and began building up her photography business to take control over her professional life, but also to show her daughter that it was possible to turn a passion into a career:

I think it was a bit of, you know, 40 being on the horizon, just reassessing where I was at and being a little bit fearful of just doing mundane jobs for the rest of my life, mundane jobs that didn’t pay particularly well. Photography had been a passion for a long time, and really just wanting to give it a go and see if I could make a living out of it, not wanting to look back and regret not having given it a bit of a try. I guess it’s just been something I’ve wanted to do for a while and I just wanted to go for it—model that sort of stuff to my daughter... They learn so much more from what they see you doing than what you tell them. – MJ/31
Self-employment as a means of creating meaningful work was also a central element in the narrative of Sharon Greene (Int. 54), an artist and serial entrepreneur who ran a performing arts school with her husband. Like the others, Sharon was explicit about her need for flexibility around her children’s schedules, but she was also careful to enumerate the psychological benefits of having control over her own career:

For me the drive is often just to grow something. It’s good when you get to the stage that you make money but for me the adrenaline comes from creating something new, or building something—the kind of intellectual stimulation of, ‘We could do this; we could do that’. This is the path to make it work—the buzz from growing something into something bigger.

In terms of the current business, it’s partly a desire to control where I put my energies and to be able to work—so I can take days off or go to the kids’ assemblies, or I can try to fit things around work... But I think another big factor is just doing something that I enjoy, ploughing my energy into something that is really very gratifying, in a sense. To get kids involved in the arts, to get adults involved in the arts, you see a lot of personal growth in people, a lot of self-confidence and creative thinking—that kind of thing. Developing a business around those concepts—there is the emotional payback. – SG/54

The ability to take control over their time and work gave many opt-in entrepreneurs a feeling of emotional or psychological control – a release from the sense of obligation they felt was inherent in organisational employment – even if the actual experience of running their own businesses sometimes involved harder work and longer hours than being an employee. Nina Thomas, the former project manager who became a natural health therapist, said running her own businesses had enabled her to approach her work-related stress in a different way. Although she was earning substantially less in her businesses than she had as an employee, she said she was happier because she was accountable to herself:

Running your own business is hard work; it’s bloody hard work, but at least I’m in control. The ideas I have are my ideas, and I decide what I’m
going to implement and what I’m not going to implement. When I used to work for other people – running projects and that – it used to be, whatever someone told you – the person who had the money – it didn’t matter what they said one day, they could change their mind the next day and you just had to do it.

It feels better. It’s a different stress, because the stress I put myself under now is my stress and I can control it. So I know that if I’m getting myself stressed out, it’s all my fault. And I can fix that. But if I’m working for someone else and they’re putting all this stress and pressure on me, there’s nothing I can do about it. The only thing I could have done about it is to walk away from the job. I would never walk away from something that I was doing; I could never leave a job undone. So I just had to live with that stress. Now, if I want to change my stress, I change it because I change what I’m doing and how I’m doing things. – NT/36

Four of the opt-in entrepreneurs saw self-employment as a way to take control over their lives financially (Int. 06, 13, 28, 48). For these women, running their own businesses gave them the potential to earn more money, even if they had not yet begun to reap the rewards. Some, like Robyn Parker, were hoping to build large businesses they could eventually sell; others, like Angie Burkett and Krista Bechtel, found that working on a project basis had the potential to be more profitable that being a salaried employee:

I think the fact that I can work when I want, and provided there is enough work – which there is – then I can earn as much money as I could in the city in two days working for myself as I could working for another employer... I can earn my own money, and I can earn as much or as little as I want – I could not do that working for a business. – KB/28

For others, self-employment offered a sense of security by allowing them to spread their work across multiple clients rather than being reliant on a single employer for their income. This view was not always shared by banks or lending institutions, however. Christine Webb, for instance, described her frustration in dealing with banks that refused to give her a home loan because of her self-employed status:
There's this whole stigma around: if you're employed by somebody, it's secure, but if you're self-employed, it's not. To be honest, I actually find it's the other way around. I find that my employment, being self-employed, is so much more stable, because it's up to me. If I lose a client, I go find other clients to keep myself earning money so that I can live. If I'm 100 percent tied to somebody and they say, 'OK, we don't need you anymore'. You're gone.

For Robyn Parker (Int. 13), becoming self-employed was an opportunity to build her “own world” after working many years as an account manager in the financial services industry, a high-flying role that involved frequent travel, long hours, and a culture of heavy drinking. When she announced that she was expecting her first child, Robyn said her employer made it “quite clear” that her job could not be done on a part-time basis; the demands of answering client requests needed a full-time commitment. Despite this, Robyn said she never once considered going back to her previous career – even part-time – as it would have meant compromising her sense of what it meant to be a good mother and a good employee:

It wasn’t really something that I could come back to with a small child unless my husband was going to be the major carer, and I was of the belief that, you know, I have spent so long working my butt off so I can have children and enjoy them, not so that I can be like the traditional Dad who comes home and pays the bills, and that’s the only time they see the kids...

And it wasn’t something I could come back to part-time either, because with account management, the clients don’t know that you’re only working three days a week, so they’ll just get irritated with you that you haven’t responded [to their calls or emails]... It just wouldn’t have worked. Even if they had said to me, 'We'll offer you your job part-time', I wouldn’t have done it because it's not the sort of thing you can do part-time. It's very much a relationship-building thing, and you need to be on call. They need you to fix problems, and I’m the sort of person who would end up working on my days off anyway, just not getting paid for it. I wouldn’t just switch my phone off and say, 'Sorry, I'm not taking this'. I'd end up fixing their problems remotely. – RP/13
Unwilling to sacrifice her vision of what it meant to be an active and involved mother or to compromise her reputation as a good worker, Robyn resigned before the end of her maternity leave. She took part-time work for a financial planner in her neighbourhood, and had a second child. But she soon became bored. Drawing on her expertise in the financial world, as well as new skills and contacts she had gained running a local playgroup, Robyn hatched an ambitious plan to build a large-scale business serving the wedding industry. With her husband’s support, Robyn took out an AUD$60,000 loan to kick start her venture and was determined to make it succeed. At the time of her interview, Robyn was dedicating more than 50 hours per week to her business, working early mornings and late nights on her business, and spending two days per week at home with her children.

For Robyn, staying home with her children was an important part of being a good mother, but her professional ambitions were stronger than ever. Becoming a mother had reduced Robyn’s devotion to her employer, but it had strengthened her commitment to her career:

The idea of being locked in to working for someone else again [pauses]—I think that’s what children do. You just say, ‘You know what? I don’t need this shit. I have this amazing child, and I’ve got this wonderful life. I don’t need to go back to that. I don’t care how much they are going to pay me’. It’s nice to have that as a back-up. Worst case, if our world completely fell apart, I know that I could walk straight back in there and get a job at AUD$100,000-plus. And I’d be fine. I’d have to sell my soul again, but I could do it. Whereas this way, I get to do things that are in line with my beliefs, and that’s probably the biggest difference.

You do get to build your own world. And I suppose that’s probably why guys have been starting businesses for years and years. It’s just that, historically, we [women] haven’t felt like we had the opportunity or the permission to do it. Whereas now we’re like, ‘Who’s going to stop us?’ – RP/13
Like many other opt-in entrepreneurs, Robyn spoke passionately about the rewards of taking control over her career, but she was also earning substantially less from her business than she had as an employee. But running her own business gave Robyn a sense of autonomy and potential. Asked to explain why she had chosen to take the risk of starting her own business rather than look for a part-time job, Robyn explained:

I guess I find it hard to see an opportunity and not do something. And my brain tends to work in such a way that it convinces me of all the good things, and I don't think about how hard it might actually be until I've already committed myself to it ... I just sort of got to the point where I said to my husband, ‘You know, I've got this idea. I'm sure it will work’. And I'd be really disappointed if I didn't do it and someone else came along and did it in three years' time, and I spent the whole time thinking, 'Man, I could have done that, and I could have done it better'.

And also, I know that you need to do big things to get a decent amount of money. You can plod along forever, but you're always going to be capped at how many hours you can work... You're always capped, whereas this has the potential to make money to the point where I can actually remove myself from it and make money—at some point I could sell it off and make lots of money. I'm not a particularly money-oriented person, but money always helps [laughs]. It’s not like I want to become a millionaire, but I don’t want to be working 60 hours a week for the rest of my life. – RP/13

6.5 Timing, risk, and pressure

The ability to work around their family responsibilities was a primary driver for all of the women in this group. Many spoke specifically of how being at home with their children, and the new contacts and experiences they gained through motherhood, were their catalysts for becoming self-employed (Int. 06, 13, 18, 19, 28, 52, 55). The act of pulling away from organisational work to stay at home with small children gave them the time and space to reimagine their careers, and consider alternative possibilities.
For example, Robyn Parker described how the experience of stepping out of the financial services industry to stay at home with her children gave her time to think about her career, and exposed her to people and ideas outside her previous professional ambit. In this respect, timing played a key role in Robyn’s decision to become self-employed. Juggling a part-time job, running her local playgroup and meeting other mothers who were running small businesses gave her the confidence to reimagine her career and take a risk on self-employment:

I think all of the different experiences I have had, including becoming a mother, have meant that I can do this business I’m running now. If I’d missed any of those steps, I don’t think I would have had the confidence or the connections to do it. What having children did was expose me to a whole bunch of people who didn’t work in financial services, and I’d never had that before … It’s expanded my connections to people in all sorts of industries—and you’re sort of home anyway, so you’ve got the flexibility, so you’re already used to doing things on your own. It makes it seem quite normal to start a business. – RP/13

Similarly, Claudia Giorio (Int. 19) said she was able to start her nutrition consulting business only after taking while on maternity leave with her infant daughter:

I always wanted to do it [start my own business] but working full-time, I didn’t have the chance and the time to think about a business and everything—so being at home opened other doors and opportunities of starting it. – 19/CG

Most of the women in this group were secondary income earners (n=12), and had the luxury of falling back on a spouse, partner, or other family members for their main income. The relative lack of financial risk in setting up their businesses was cited explicitly by five of these women (Int. 18, 19, 28, 36, 55). By their own accounts, these women’s status as secondary income earners gave them the luxury of stepping back from organisational employment. The relatively low risk entailed in setting up their businesses was a key element in their decisions to become self-employed:
Because [my husband] is paying the mortgage, the money I earn is, I guess, bonus. That’s the reason why I took the risk of starting my own business—because there is a bit of risk involved. But once you remove the financial pressure, it is like kind of earning money off a hobby... That is the main thing that I think would be a problem with starting your own business – the pressure and the uncertainty of knowing where it is going to go and how well it is going to do. If you take the financial pressure off it, it’s sort of less risk, if you know what I mean. That made it really easy for me to give it a go; whereas if I had to rely on this business to pay a mortgage and—you have to have an income every week – I probably would not have taken that step. So I guess it was his security that helped me give it a go. – KB/28

Priya Patel (Int. 55), who had taken a few years out of organisational employment to have babies and care for a sick relative, described her decision as part-personal, part-financial:

My sense in setting up a business was that our family wasn’t used to the income anyway. I hadn’t been working for so long, but we weren’t used to the income, so we had adjusted to having the one salary – so now’s as good a time as any to give it a go. Obviously, I’m very fortunate that I’ve got a husband who is extremely supportive and has and continues to support me – both financially and emotionally – in setting up the business. That has really helped me, day-to-day ... It’s probably a bit of a generalisation, but I honestly think that that’s why so many [mothers] pursue their passions, because they take this natural break. They get this time out to step back because they’re the ones usually at home having the child, looking after the child, whereas men don’t often get that opportunity, unless they take a deliberate break. – PP/55

For the lone mothers and female breadwinners in the sample (Int. 31, 48, 51, 52, 53), the financial pressure associated with self-employment gave them greater incentive to succeed. Talking about her financial situation as a self-employed lone mother, Marnie Jaffe reflected:

There seems to be quite a few women [in my area] who are dabbling in home-based businesses. I do look at their situation and think, ‘Oh it would be much easier to have another income earner around’. Yeah—there is definitely additional pressure [being a lone mother]. But I don’t know, like I said, there is this potential for me to make this a successful business and have a really good income, better than what I would be earning as a
housekeeper. It adds pressure and it also adds motivation I suppose in a way. I have gone through a very fearful period of thinking, ‘I shouldn’t do this, I should be out getting a nine-to-five job and have a regular income and whatever’. But like I said, I’m just in a space now where I really want to give it a go’. – MJ/31

But for Belinda Casey (Int. 53), one of just two married breadwinners in the opt-in entrepreneur category, the financial pressure had tipped into obligation. A former nurse who had set up her own private practice as a health consultant, Belinda was pleasantly surprised at the income she was able to generate working in her own business, but found the demands of running her own business were conflicting with her sense of obligation to her children. Asked to compare her situation as a self-employed person in private practice to her previous experience working as an employee nurse, Belinda replied:

I’m more time poor. Being in private practice, I’m far too accessible to my clients, to my email, and my office – and being in the house means that I feel like I don’t switch off enough from my business and my work. There’s not enough separation. You know that flight safety thing where they say that if the plane’s going down you need to fit your oxygen mask before you fit everyone else’s? I feel like what I’ve been doing is just spreading myself too thin to keep everybody happy, whereas in actual fact I’ve not got my oxygen mask on… I’m at the point where I could easily not offer the service because I’m feeling a bit too torn between my family and what I’m doing. – BC/53

Three other long-term self-employed women in this group also told of how they had decided to wind back their businesses at various times when they became too large or too demanding (Int. 36, 48, 52). Some years ago, Nina Thomas decided to turn her sole practice as a natural health therapist into a full-service natural health clinic, renting rooms to other practitioners and helping them to market their businesses. Soon, the business became too big to manage, and Nina began to experience the same pressures that had led her to flee organisational employment:
You think you can do it all, and offer the best service in the world, and then realise that what it’s doing is taking you away from you and your children. And the reason why I went into business to start with is to be with my children. And when I was doing something that large, I had lots of people expecting me to do things for them and all that was doing, for me, was taking me away from what I was trying to do, which was to be a good mum. So, at the end of the three years, when my lease came up, I just went, ‘Nah, I can’t do this anymore’. Because I was just, once again, stressed beyond all belief. It wasn’t the kind of life I wanted. – NT/36

While most of the opt-in entrepreneurs spoke positively about their experiences, the pressures cited by Belinda and Nina illustrated that the line between feeling obligated to an employer and feeling obligated to one’s business was a thin one, requiring a constant recalibration of priorities and commitments.

6.6 Willingness to return to organisational employment

Of the 16 opt-in entrepreneurs, nine were wholly self-employed (not supplementing their incomes with full-time, part-time, or casual employment). These nine women were generally mixed on the question of whether they would consider returning to work as an employee in an organisational context. Flexibility, financial hardship, and work-life stresses were major themes that emerged among the women in this group. Presented with the question “Would you ever consider working for someone else (as an employee) instead of being self-employed?” four women answered, “Yes”; two said they were “Not Sure”; and three said, “No”, they would not consider working for someone else.

Those who said they would consider returning to organisational employment cited the financial instability and work-life pressures they experienced in self-employment. For example, Angie Burkett (Int. 06) said she would consider returning to organisational employment if her husband lost his job, or her source or work dried up.
Others (Int. 52, 53) perceived that organisational employment would be less time consuming than self-employment, and potentially more financially stable (Int. 14, 53).

Flexibility was also a core theme that ran throughout the responses, both affirmative and negative. Anna Sanderson said she would consider returning to work as an employee only “if the hours were flexible enough to work with my family commitments” (Int. 14). Belinda Casey said she had grown accustomed to “being my own boss, flexible hours” and was “not sure [she] could go back” to being an employee (Int. 53). Christine Webb had tried going back into part-time work previously, and resolved that she was, “so used to the freedom of running my own business now, and doing what I want, that I could never go back to working for somebody else” (Int. 48). This sentiment was shared by Melissa Smith, who said the benefits of self-employment generally outweighed the negatives as “the personal satisfaction, freedom of choice, and the ability to spend more quality time with my daughter is worth the hard work, lack of sleep, and the entrepreneurial roller coaster ride” (Int. 56).

6.7 Conclusion

Sixteen women in this study, representing 27 percent of the sample, saw self-employment as a way to create meaningful, rewarding work while retaining maximum flexibility to accommodate their children’s daily schedules. The women in this group spoke passionately about their paid work, both personally and professionally, but were equally adamant that their career ambitions should not impinge on their family lives. The opt-in entrepreneurs described self-employment as a conscious and deliberate choice (pull), reflecting their preference for meaningful and rewarding work (career) and active and engaged motherhood (family). But closer examination of their narratives
revealed that, for many women in this group, the decision to opt-in to self-employment was also motivated, in part, by a shared perception that organisational employment required family-related sacrifices they were unwilling to make (push).
Chapter Seven:

Forced-Out Entrepreneurs

7.1 Introduction

The largest narrative group to emerge from the interviews was the *forced-out entrepreneurs*: women who felt pushed into self-employment by external forces largely beyond their control. Unlike the *opt-in entrepreneurs*, who described the transition to self-employment as a proactive choice, these 35 women – or 58 percent of the sample – had self-employment narratives that were primarily reactive. The participants’ individual circumstances were varied and broad. But when asked to describe how they started their businesses, the women in this category almost always began their accounts with a negative anecdote about the forces that contrived to push them out of organisational employment, followed by a description of how they came to be self-employed. A number of the women in this group spoke of ‘falling into’ self-employment by chance, rather than seeking it out by design. Others spoke of self-employment as their only viable option, given their commitments and circumstances. The stories were rarely simple; most of the women felt that their experiences contained both positive and negative elements. But the thread that united their narratives was always *constraint*, a feeling of being forced into self-employment rather than being lured by its intrinsic benefits, even if many of the women eventually came to appreciate those benefits.

The majority of the women in this group fell between the ages of 35-44 years (n=22), although the range of ages extended from 24 to 59 years. Most were married or living with a partner who was the primary income earner in the household (n=25); a
small but significant number were the primary breadwinners in their dual-income households (n=7). Four women were lone parents at the time they started their own businesses, although one had since re-married. Most of the women were running small serviced-based consultancies. The majority of women in this group had been in business for more than one but fewer than three years (n=12), followed by women who had been in business for more than three but fewer than five years (n=9). There was also considerable variation in reported gross weekly incomes, with 12 women earning between AUD$0 and AUD$599 per week; 13 earning between AUD$600 and AUD$1299 per week; and 9 women who earned AUD$1399 per week or more (one did not respond). Half the women in the group reporting working 20-34 hours per week in their businesses (n=17), followed by women working 35 hours per week or more (n=14); the remainder worked 15-19 hours per week (n=4). Table 7.1 outlines the demographic characteristics of this group:

Table 7.1 Characteristics of the forced-out entrepreneurs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Int.</th>
<th>Name#</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. Children</th>
<th>Age of Youngest Child</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Type of Business</th>
<th>Business Duration</th>
<th>Income AUD/wk</th>
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<td>Nadine Wilson</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>250-399**</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>1&gt;3yrs</td>
<td>1-149</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1&gt;3yrs</td>
<td>400-599</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Betty Foster</td>
<td>45-54</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>5&gt;10yrs</td>
<td>1000-1299**</td>
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<td>Alana Seymour</td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Rebecca Hopkins</td>
<td>55-59</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>M*</td>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>5&gt;10yrs</td>
<td>1000-1299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 In this group, there was one subject (Int. 47) who reported nil income. This was owing to the fact that her business was a small-scale agricultural operation which required substantial start-up investments that would only be recouped over time.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Experience</th>
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<td>M</td>
<td>Policy</td>
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<td>1300-</td>
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Table 7.1 Characteristics of the forced-out entrepreneurs, continued
The remainder of this section highlights the primary factors cited by the women in this group for their transition from organisational employment to self-employment. They include: feeling pushed out of a workplace situation because of their caregiving responsibilities; the inability to negotiate or retain part-time or flexible working arrangements; being made redundant while pregnant or on maternity leave; the inability to find or afford child care that aligned with their needs; geographical remoteness; and industrial or workplace downsizing. Some of these push factors were internal (e.g. professional dissatisfaction with the quality or promotional potential of part-time work); others were more clearly external (e.g. being made redundant or living in a geographically remote area). Nevertheless, the thread that wove these narratives together was a shared sense among these women that self-employment was their only viable employment option given their commitments, circumstances, and desires.

7.2 ‘Battered employee syndrome’

Like the opt-in entrepreneurs, the forced-out entrepreneurs shared a common desire to work part-time, or to fit full-time work around their children’s daily schedules.
But unlike the *opt-in entrepreneurs*, they did not describe self-employment as a transition they undertook proactively. Rather, these women perceived self-employment as a reluctant response to external circumstances or events – the only or least-worst option available to them in a limited (or gendered) labour market. Seventeen women in this group reported working in their businesses between 20-34 hours per week; fourteen women reported working more than 35 hours per week, including five who reported working more than 45 hours per week. The *forced-out entrepreneurs* shared a common desire to be physically and emotionally present in their children’s daily lives; to have the flexibility to attend school events or stay home with sick children. While some of the *opt-in entrepreneurs* foresaw the potential conflicts between their commitments to their children and their perceived obligations to their employers, and jumped out of organisational employment before these conflicts arose, many of the *forced-out entrepreneurs* tried to stay connected to their jobs after motherhood. These women spoke at length about how their workplaces became uncomfortable or openly hostile places after they switched to part-time work. Their discomfort and dissatisfaction derived from multiple slights, from subtle remarks about their reduced work schedules to being sidelined or passed over for promotions. Nevertheless, many of the women in this group fought to maintain their careers – sometimes for many years – developing what one participant dubbed, ‘battered-employee syndrome’, a personal and professional crisis of confidence that pushed them out of organisational work.

Jade Lloyd Norton (Int. 57) was once a rising star as a human resources executive in a large male-dominated manufacturing company. She had three children and three maternity leaves in relatively quick succession, and felt her status within the firm slip with each return to work. Jade told of how she spent several years “treading
water” professionally because the managers had “no idea what to do with [her] in a part-time capacity.” Frustrated working on piecemeal projects and being overlooked for more substantial jobs, Jade made a presentation to her employers highlighting how a number of high-potential female employees had left the company after having children, and how the company could save money and increase productivity if it provided more and better opportunities for part-time workers like herself. She felt that her managers were simply not interested in making any of the changes she recommended:

I was frustrated, both from a business point of view, but also just on a personal level. There were feelings of, like, ’But I’ve put so much into this and I’ve got potential, and you’re not meeting me half way. So does this mean that you don’t value me?’ And all that stuff you go through: loss of confidence – personal confidence – but also professional confidence. Like, maybe I wasn’t as capable as I thought I was.

I don’t know if it’s a real term, but I use it constantly. I felt like I had ‘battered employee syndrome,’ where I just felt like I’d given my all and then there was this. And I knew it [could happen] because I had seen other women go through it. But it was that reality of it hitting me. That’s one of the reasons I chose not to go and get a job in another place, because I think I could have quite easily got employment in a part-time capacity somewhere else, but maybe had some of the same hurdles. But I just didn’t feel with my heart or my head that I could engage in that fairly.

As Jade was preparing to leave the company, she decided to see if she could get some freelance contracts as a human resources consultant, enough to tide her over for a few months until she had the energy and confidence to look for another part-time job. But before she knew it, she was running a successful consultancy, one that would eventually employ both herself and her husband on a full-time basis:

My main aim was not to start my own business. My aim was to just play around for a couple of months and spend some time with my kids and then turn around and say to my husband, ’I’m now going to get a job.’ But I’ve been very lucky; I have had great referrals and become a business.
I have never had any desire to run my own business. It was my backhanded way of getting an extension on maternity leave with my husband's blessing. But the work started rolling in. It rolled in before I left [my previous employer], and I never really got a break. Before I knew it, I was running a business. – JNL/57

Nearly two-thirds (n=23) of the forced-out entrepreneurs cited some form of workplace conflict as their primary motivator for becoming self-employed. The nature of these conflicts profoundly affected these women's professional confidence, leading many to question whether the expectations of organisational employment were compatible with their feelings of maternal obligation. The conflicts included: difficulty balancing childcare responsibilities against the expectations of their firms (Int. 02, 04, 05, 11, 21, 23, 25, 26, 33, 43, 40, 58); difficulty negotiating or retaining part-time or flexible working arrangements (Int. 04, 21, 29, 33, 34, 58); difficulty having their status or seniority recognised in part-time work, including being denied opportunities for advancement or given inferior projects or assignments (Int. 11, 15, 25, 42, 43, 50, 57, 58); and being made redundant while pregnant or on maternity leave (Int. 20, 30, 32, 40, 60). Regardless of the circumstances that pushed them out of organisational employment, many of these women, like Jade, came to self-employment only after extensive battles – personally, professionally, and sometimes even legally – with their former employers. Whether they ended up feeling empowered by self-employment depended on the ultimate success of the business, but the initial decision to become self-employed was a response to these negative external forces.

7.3 Organisational culture

Twelve of the women in this group described a feeling of disconnect between what they felt they could offer as employee-mothers and the expectations placed on
them by their employers. Skye MacKay’s (Int. 33) experience working as a senior marketing executive for a large agency that touted itself as a family-friendly workplace was typical of this story line. Skye returned to work after the birth of her twins – her second and third children – but found that the day-to-day demands of raising three small children did not mesh with the culture of the company:

It was the type of environment where it was really frowned upon to leave at five. I had come from a corporate background, and before I had a family I was probably one of those people that would work way past five. I probably still work way past my own nominated hours. But it was just that you were made to feel that you weren’t putting in [enough time] – and there were little comments about, ‘Oh, you’re leaving at five again?’ And I was like, ‘Well yeah. I should be able to. So should you.’ So it was those little things. It was frowned upon working within your designated hours—the culture of that particular company, even though it was supposed to be a good workplace for women. – SM/33

This view was echoed by other women with similar experiences in workplaces where the unspoken expectations of bosses and colleagues ran against the official policies. Alana Seymour (Int. 11) described feeling pushed to the limits by her former employer:

It took a real toll, because I was working every weekend and night – like for the whole weekend and every night [to get my work done]. It was really stressful. It was to do with the way things were resourced in my workplace, and the way things were run really badly. I knew that there was a better alternative if I was working elsewhere—or for myself. But that really took a toll. There were periods of six weekends in a row where I didn’t see my daughter. It was really awful being so stressed, when I was very heavily pregnant toward the end. So it wasn’t that they were saying ‘No.’ It wasn’t that they weren’t ostensibly family friendly, it was just that the conditions of the job weren’t family friendly. – AM/11

Sometimes, the demands of the workplace were explicit; sometimes they were implicit. Environmental consultant Kyra Nash Goodwin (Int. 43) returned to her previous employer after her first maternity leave, but found that the long hours and
travel involved in her former job were “no longer enjoyable” with a small child. She described the stress she experienced trying to meet the needs of an infant who was repeatedly home sick from child care, and constantly battling the sense that she was coming up short in her employers’ eyes. Like other women who described feeling pressure from employers, Kyra could not put her finger on whether her feelings of inadequacy were the result of actual pressure applied by her employer, or a feeling that she was letting herself down by failing to live up to the standards she had set before she had children to care for:

I couldn’t help but feel that maybe my employer wasn’t all that happy with my performance. Not that they ever said that. They were fantastic. But I suppose, for myself, as a worker—yeah [pauses]. I probably didn’t feel like I was contributing as much. I think it’s difficult to contribute on the same level. Or maybe it’s your perceived contribution ... Sometimes I think it was my fault. – KNG/43

The long hours of her former job as an architect pushed Nicki Ellis (Int. 04) into self-employment. At the time of her interview, Nicki was scraping together a small income doing contract work for her former firm and picking up small architecture jobs from friends. She had recently been offered a part-time job with another firm that was enthusiastic about her skills and willing to accommodate her request to work three-days per week, but Nicki refused:

I just felt that it would require too much of a commitment than I was prepared to give. Because I used to work really long, long, long hours to meet deadlines. And I guess that still weighs heavily on me. I think that a lot of this is about what’s going on in my head, but there is definitely a culture of ‘if you’re seen to be working long hours, then you’re a committed, valuable employee’. This was in lots of practices that I had experience working in. I think it is kind of a misguided attitude, but it seems to be quite entrenched in Australia. – NE/04
Skye Mackay, the former marketing executive who felt judged by her former employer for leaving work at five o’clock, decided to quit after developing a stress-related illness and receiving advice from her doctor that she was overworked. Skye and her husband were living far from their extended families, and had no one to help them with the care of their three young children. They still needed Skye’s income, but she felt unemployable given the demands of her three small children, who were frequently home sick from care:

I really don’t believe—I really honestly don’t believe I could go out and get a job given my current situation. I don’t believe any employer would accept my position and my requirements. I really, honestly believe that. – SM/33

The view that parenthood was a handicap in the labour market was particularly strong for women who had more than two children, had no family support, or were lone mothers. Lily Slovena (Int. 38), a lone mother and immigrant with no extended family in the country, was using self-employment to supplement her part-time income as an administrative assistant because she could not find a full-time job that would accommodate her son’s school hours:

The idea was to be able to make an income out of something you could do from home, in your own time. Because every time I would apply for a job, I had to explain that I could only work between this time and this time. So you’re not really the favourite. If they have another employee who can work longer hours, then they prefer them. So the idea was to find something that I could do from home.

Would I like to continue with my own business? Well, at the moment I don’t have a choice. I have to do it because I feel that this is something that is providing for me at the moment – LS/38

Diana Lewins (Int. 05) also became self-employed after finding herself alone with no extended family network when her first child was just six months old. Diana felt that
starting her own business was the only way to manage the daily demands of raising a
small child as a lone mother, but it also allowed her to escape the sense of employee
obligation shared by both the opt-in entrepreneurs and the forced-out entrepreneurs. For
Diana, returning to work as an employee was not an option:

I knew that I couldn’t do that. I would have been an option maybe if I had
wanted to leave [my son] in child care for 12 hours a day, but I just didn’t
want to. And I didn’t have an understanding boss. I was the head of the
office in Australia, and they expect you to work very long hours when
you’re dealing with the office in New York, so it wasn’t something I could
do.

I felt the onus was on me to provide maybe an even more supportive
environment for [my son] because I was a single parent. I needed a
situation where that single parenting wasn’t a detriment to the amount of
time I spent with him. In terms of my options, I wanted to provide a
situation that was entirely flexible around his needs, and also meant that I
could earn money. I wanted a situation where I didn’t have to work five
days a week, where I could perhaps work four days a week and any other
work that needed to be done on top of that could be done in the evenings
when he was in bed. I wouldn’t have that pressure on me if I was working
for somebody else—if he was ill from child care. I wouldn’t have to
explain to somebody why I was leaving. – DL/05

Long hours work culture was a push factor for many of the senior professional
women in this group. Elisabeth Slater (Int. 25) was working as the executive director of
a national industry body when she unexpectedly fell pregnant with her first child. The
job was fast-paced and demanding. Her work required frequent interstate travel, and
keeping a constant eye on current affairs and policy developments. After several months
of negotiation with her employer, Elisabeth resigned before going on maternity leave:

I wasn’t forced to [resign] but we came to a mutual agreement that I
would quit my job when I was pregnant, because there wasn’t really the
capacity for me to probably continue that work because of the high levels
of interstate travel. The nature of the industry meant that it was going to
be difficult to find a replacement just for 12 months with the skill set
needed. Anyone at that level of executive director is looking for a longer
term career move, not looking just to ‘fill in’ or a stop-gap measure.
It was a fairly high stress role that required staying on top of policy changes and current events on an hourly basis at some stages, because there was legislation going through the Parliament. I decided to take a personal view about how I would be able to contribute to that industry, but also, I guess, do a decent job of raising a child if I was going back into a role after 12 months, being a year out of the debate, and what those options might be.

Reflecting on that then, and talking to my employer, they did offer to think about how I might be able to make it work. Some ideas were thrown around about being paid one or two days a week while I was on maternity leave, to try and sort of keep up to date with what was going on in the industry. But in the end, it really came down—they were very good about it—we started—led by me, as executive director, a bit of a search to see what our options were. That was sort of when it became clear that back-filling a maternity leave position—people weren’t that interested in moving into a fairly complex environment where it can take 12 months to get your head around some of the issues. So it just became a bit too hard in the end, and so it was by mutual agreement that I would resign and use those last few months to actually assist in the recruitment of my replacement. – ES/25

Although Elisabeth described her decision to resign as mutual and voluntary, the circumstances under which she quit were clearly related to her becoming a mother. The primary forces that pushed Elisabeth to resign were the difficulty of finding someone to replace her on maternity leave, managing the long hours and frequent travel required by the job, and Elisabeth’s desire to fulfil her own minimum standards of being a “decent” parent. Elisabeth said she was “a little bit sad to be having to leave” her job, but was pragmatic about the circumstances and “fairly confident” that she would find suitable work. After spending a few months at home with her baby, Elisabeth began looking for contract work or part-time employment. Because of her seniority and experience, however, Elisabeth struggled to find any job that aligned with her level of experience and satisfied her desire to be available for her son to the extent she deemed appropriate:
I guess I’d always thought if you’re going to have a child, you may as well raise it yourself. I mean, it’s your child and you need to parent it. So I’d always come at it from that point of view, that work would probably have to come second. Not just from a logistical point of view, but from a personal value point of view. I guess my own personal view was that my child came first. That was inconsistent – incompatible rather – with the offers that I was being presented with. I realised I was going to have to package myself differently and look admittedly at a lower level than I had been, in order to make it work, I suppose.

A motivating factor for me was to acknowledge to myself that a full-time job was just not viable at that time for personal reasons as well. That a business, that my own business, was going to give me the intellectual challenge, the feeling that I’m contributing to society, making a difference, I suppose. But also to make me feel that I’m also doing a good job of parenting my son. So I could get involved with the mothers’ group activities at the time, and now I can volunteer at the school for those things that were important to me...

It [the business] was definitely conceived as a model to keep myself employed while I considered my options down the track. I certainly didn’t go into this to create a business that I was then going to grow and sell. Yeah, it really is just a way to brand myself... It was just a means to an end, rather than a long-term vision. – ES/25

Elisabeth’s narrative reveals the difficulty experienced by senior professional women who wish to stay connected to their careers but also feel strongly that good motherhood requires a high level of daily engagement with their children. Although she spoke about her decision to resign as a voluntary choice, other aspects of her account revealed her sadness and dissatisfaction with her circumstances. With her son about to start school, Elisabeth was assessing her options for returning once again to full-time employment, but was finding it difficult to re-enter the workforce at the appropriate level. With a five year gap in full-time employment, Elisabeth felt she was no longer qualified for the senior executive role she once occupied, but was overqualified for more junior positions:
I’ve got to pretty much just plot it out, map it out myself in that I’ve taken myself down a few levels in terms of the jobs that I’m doing. Do I stay at that level, or do I try and build myself back up?

I’m probably at the stage that if I don’t get a full-time job in the next two years, I’m probably just going to have to transition into almost semi-retirement kind of roles I think. So yeah, my career is dead and—well, the career path that I had planned for myself is certainly dead. I think that now I think about work that I find personally fulfilling, and work that obviously earns me some money to take the family on holidays at Christmas. – ES/25

These accounts highlight the sense of futility many of the forced-out entrepreneurs felt about organisational employment. Some fought and failed; others felt set up for failure and resigned before their children were born. Like the opt-in entrepreneurs, these women shared a common desire to work fewer than full-time hours or to fit their working hours around the needs of their children without fear of judgement or reproach. Unlike the opt-in entrepreneurs, the forced-out entrepreneurs were more likely to regard self-employment as their only viable option, but not necessarily an intrinsically desirable one. In the market for labour, motherhood had rendered them ‘damaged goods’ that no one wanted to buy.

7.4 Part-time problems

In addition to broad complaints about the futility of combining organisational employment with motherhood, several women in this group cited specific problems negotiating part-time or flexible working arrangements as primary motivators for becoming self-employed (Int. 04, 21, 29, 33, 34, 58). Some of these women asked their employers for part-time work and were flatly denied; others were able to negotiate flexible working arrangements that were later revoked. Some who were successful in getting part-time work were ultimately dissatisfied with the quality of the work they
were given, or, like Jade Lloyd Norton, felt sidelined or overlooked within their organisations after reducing their hours (Int. 11, 15, 25, 42, 43, 50, 57, 58). The common core of these stories is that the women wanted to stay in organisational employment – at least initially. Self-employment does not emerge in the narratives as these women’s first choice. Most of the forced-out entrepreneurs fought to maintain their status in organisational employment and came to self-employment only after these negotiations failed.

Verity Templeton (Int. 29) left her position as a senior marketing executive for a management consultancy when a new manager revoked the part-time, flexible work arrangement she had negotiated with her previous boss. Verity described being blindsided by the decision, which she felt discredited the years she had worked for the company:

I was really angry because I’d worked through four years in that position. People who had been there knew what a good job I’d done and how I turned around the marketing department. I ran a really tight ship. Even me having a child and working part time—I was still delivering quality. I was still getting results that were actually delivering the most successful campaigns that we had had with me being on maternity leave, with me still being involved. So I was very frustrated and annoyed and just, “Oh my Gosh, I can’t believe that this is still how it is in some workplaces!”

He kind of came in not knowing me or my work, not really wanting to get to know that either—just coming in, wanting to do things quite differently. It’s his way or the highway kind of thing. I think he was of the school that said, ‘I don’t understand women trying to juggle work, they should either be at home with their child or – if they’re going to choose work – they should be here and fully committed.’ To be honest, I was really keen to get out after that conversation. It happened within a matter of weeks. I have never looked back. It probably all happened for a reason, in that that forced me to start [my business]—or it all came about because of that. – VT/29
Verity opened her own consultancy and was employing five full-time staff at the time of her interview, around four years later. Before she started her business, Verity briefly considered looking for another part-time job, but was disappointed with the quality of jobs available for someone with her seniority and expertise:

I couldn't really find a position that was at the level I wanted. A lot of the positions were more marketing admin. It would have been like turning back the time five or six years. For me, I've always been very career driven, very motivated, wanting to keep pushing myself forward. – VT/29

The inability to find good quality part-time work was an experience shared by other high performing women in the sample, whose employers were not sure how to accommodate a senior employee who wanted to work part time. When accountant Kristen Janovsky (Int. 21) approached her employer about negotiating part-time hours after her maternity leave, she was denied. She remembered:

It was pretty much, ‘This is what we’ve got for you. If you want a job, it’s here. We will always have a full-time job for you, but we can’t do part-time.’ They said that it wouldn’t work. They said, ‘If you’re just processing data then, yes, maybe we could do part-time because we don’t need you in the office. We don’t have clients looking for you, et cetera.’ But because I had a role where I had a lot of contact with the clients, then they said, ‘No, we want you here all the time so that when they call, you’re here.’” – KJ/21

Unwilling to put her infant into full-time long day care, Kristen resigned and began to look for other jobs. She found a job working three days per week for a different employer, but soon encountered similar difficulties. When pressure mounted for Kristen to work more days and longer hours in the office, she decided to resign and look for work as a freelance bookkeeper. Like Verity, however, Kristen was dismayed at watching her career slide backwards, both financially and professionally. So instead of becoming a bookkeeper, Kristen completed the necessary qualifications to set up her
own accountancy firm. Pushed by the inflexibility of organisational employment, Kristen’s motivation for starting her own business was to gain flexibility without sacrificing her ambition:

I thought, I’ve done all the study and got all of the qualifications—and then I was just going to go back to earning, you know, $50 an hour instead of what I was used to earning... I had always thought I would own my own business. I just hadn’t had the opportunity to go and do it, whereas this sort of pushed me into making that decision. – KJ/21

Many of the women who were able to negotiate part-time work with their previous employers described feeling that their careers stagnated once they were no longer in the office five days a week. This was particularly true for the senior professionals in the sample, who felt they were given less interesting, less challenging work or were passed over for promotions or career-development opportunities because of their part-time status. Many of these women felt unfairly judged by the number of hours they spent in the office, rather than the by quality of their work. They expressed frustration at watching other, seemingly less qualified people rise through the ranks, while their own careers plateaued.

Like the opt-in entrepreneurs and the career-focused entrepreneurs, the idea of control or autonomy figured heavily in the accounts of the forced-out entrepreneurs. Self-employment for the women in this group offered a chance to seize some control over a professional career path that had been stymied by a lack of opportunities to advance within part-time organisational employment. Like Jade, the ‘battered employee’ described earlier in this chapter, many women felt that their employers simply forgot about them when they reduced their hours or took maternity leave. Linda Timms (Int. 42), for instance, described her frustration at being overlooked for a promotion within her management team while she was on maternity leave:
The manager of the team that I worked in—that role came up. I didn’t even know. I found out by e-mail that somebody had been given that role, somebody within our team. And I was like, well, ‘Why wasn’t I invited to put my hand up for it?’ And they went, ‘Well, you were on leave.’ Yeah—maternity leave, not dead leave!

We all knew it was my intention to return, and I’d always been very vocal about that. I had always been very vocal about my leave— all my maternity leaves were six months. I had always intended to come back. And yet there was always limited communication with me about opportunities and change taking place while I was on leave. And I just kind of got a bit fed up with it. It’s not good enough to go, ‘Sorry, we’re working on that.’ I just started thinking, ‘You know what? I’m tired of waiting for you to work on that, so I’m just going to take a little more control as far as my autonomy and my professional development.’ – LT/42

Jocelyn Beaton’s (Int. 15) breaking point came when her managers told her they would not continue to promote her unless she moved into full-time work, even though she was already managing three people successfully on a part-time basis. Jocelyn had come late to motherhood, and spoke at length about the importance of spending time with her young children. She described feeling torn between this desire and her ambition to capitalise on the years of expertise he had developed as a policy advisor and manager of charitable organisations. Jocelyn decided to become an independent consultant after meeting with a career coach for guidance. The advice she received gave Jocelyn the confidence to repackage both her vast expertise and limited time availability as selling points:

It was about the level of seniority for me. And I felt like I did have really a lot of seniority, you know, I should be considered for senior jobs. But I’m an older mother, so with the level of experience I had, I still had really young children and didn’t want to work full-time— Really, the life coach kind of sold it to me, consulting. You can be the external expert. You can work at the CEO level. You can work at a very senior level because they are buying in your expertise.
And the fact that you’re not always available, which is what happens if you’re a part-time employee, is not a negative. It’s actually the norm for a consultant. You can dictate the hours that you’re available, and you don’t have to tell them it’s because you’re picking up your kids. You can tell them that you’re available for morning meetings on these days—it doesn’t matter who the other ‘client’ is. You can say, ‘I’ve got a meeting.’ But it’s actually a meeting with my children [laughs]. – JB/15

These accounts highlight the frustrations many women expressed with part-time or flexible working arrangements: 1) the inability to negotiate or retain reduced hours or flexible working arrangements; 2) poor quality part-time work; and 3) poor promotion or development potential within part-time or flexible employment. For many of these women, the transition to self-employment was a struggle, a negative process that entailed a significant degree of conflict, both personally and professionally. But like Jocelyn, many of the women in this sub-group spoke positively about the effects that being driven to self-employment had on their lives. Nicki, the architect who turned down a part-time job, described her transition to self-employment in both negative and positive terms:

I think, I’ve sort of arrived at this situation as a response to some really negative experiences but also I do think that it is—there’s potential that it could be a really positive experience... Because I think when you’re on a trajectory in a—working in a conventional job and you don’t have this thing that happens called children, then it’s so easy just to continue doing what you’re doing. Whereas the children arrive and that makes you kind of reflect on what it is you want to do with your life, and it gives you an opportunity to actually pursue that. That’s what I mean. It’s a positive and a negative. – NE/04

7.5 Redundancy

Nine of the forced-out entrepreneurs became self-employed after being made redundant. Six of these women were made redundant while pregnant or on maternity leave (Int. 20, 30, 32, 40, 49, 60); the other three were laid off as a result of industrial
restructuring or downsizing (Int. 27, 32, 45). Only one of the redundancies was voluntary (Int. 45); the rest took the women by surprise. All but one woman (Int. 49) said the sense of insecurity – or outright betrayal – they felt after their redundancies was a primary motivation for becoming self-employed.

Annika Satoh (Int. 20) was seven months pregnant when she got the news that her position at a large management consultancy was being made redundant, and that the company was not planning to pay her maternity benefits. Annika threatened to sue the company, which eventually agreed to pay her benefits. Corporate restructuring and retrenchments had been a relatively frequent occurrence in Annika’s working life – this was her third redundancy. But visibly pregnant, with little chance of finding new employment, Annika said the timing of this retrenchment rattled her faith in organisational employment and prompted her to explore a long-standing interest in executive coaching:

It really made me feel like, ‘I’ve had enough of working for someone else.’ I think my business was going to happen anyway. It was probably a case of right timing. Even though the experience of having been made redundant and having to go through the legal battle wasn’t, in itself, pleasant, it made me think about making the business more official. – AS/20

Frances Block (Int. 30) described a similar experience being made redundant while on maternity leave with her first child. The experience rattled her faith in her position as an employee mother – combined with the experience of becoming a mother – caused her to question the very nature of her work. After many years of working in a corporate setting, at the time of her interview, Frances was in the process of setting up a business as an education consultant, providing a service that was deeply meaningful to her. She described her transition this way:
When I had my son I was still working in the corporate world and I was actually working for quite a large organisation. When I got pregnant I was retrenched – or while I was on maternity leave. So that kind of threw huge spanner in the works. I guess I just went through a really tricky time there for a while where I just kind of—I was really upset by that, and I was just kind of looking I guess at everything—becoming a new mum, and what’s it all about, and what am I doing, et cetera, et cetera.

I had quite a senior level position, so basically what I decided to do when I did go back to work was that I just took a couple of contracts and I worked for a couple of organisations setting up their Melbourne offices and putting their teams together. Then when I fell pregnant with my daughter, and I had her, I had one of those really Oprah moments where I just went, ‘I’m not going to do this anymore, I’m sick of making money for other people, I want to do something that’s for me.’ I’ve got these two children, I want them to feel proud of me and know that I contributed to society I guess in a way. – FB/30

The loss of faith with organisational employment was a common experience for the women who had been made redundant involuntarily. Talia Marshall (Int. 40) was also retrenched from her job as a corporate lawyer when she was five months pregnant, an experience she described as profoundly unsettling. As a result, Talia said she had come to view “employment as being a vulnerable position,” and that she would not readily consider working for someone else ever again. After her daughter was born, Talia started her own small law firm. She said one of her main goals was to create a firm where male and female employees could be open about their caregiving responsibilities, with both colleagues and clients:

My experience is that even with firms that hold themselves out as being family-friendly and flexible, it’s really on the basis of: We will permit you to have children so long as you don’t let it impact on your work. We’ll give you the opportunity, but don’t let it impact on your work—which is not flexible at all...

I only have a small number of clients, so it’s something that I address with them before I agree to act for them. I don’t know if I’m unique in my profession, integrating parenthood with being a lawyer. But I certainly think my business is unique within the profession for doing that as a
strategy, right the way through to having my daughter with me in meetings. – TM/40

The feeling of betrayal that accompanied the involuntary redundancies was not confined to the women who were pregnant or on maternity leave. The two women who were made redundant involuntarily (Int. 27, 32), also felt disadvantaged by their need for part-time work, and the difficulty of finding or negotiating a part-time or flexible arrangement with a new employer. Carrie Olmstead (Int. 27) cited the experience of losing her part-time administrative job in a real estate office as her main driver for becoming certified as a real estate agent and opening a rival agency. She said:

I just felt very let down by it. And I thought you know in a small town, what else can I do? I suppose I was almost embarrassed that that had happened to me, and felt very let down. I felt I had been doing a very good job, though I was doing it on a part-time basis. I felt—the company I was working for was very male dominated, and I felt it was hard for a girl to do well in that company anyhow. I also felt that, in real estate, people do quite like dealing with women, because they're very good at following up and dealing with little things, really, which sometimes men don’t...

It was the first time in my working career that I’d ever been made redundant. And as they say: don’t get mad, get even… It was for economic reasons in their office, I suppose. But they decided to close the office for only the days that I was working, because I was only working part-time. So I can see their point too. But it probably could have just continued on the way that it was. Yeah. But it just created a fantastic opportunity, so I can’t really complain. I should be thanking them really. – CO/27

Julie Phillips (Int. 49), the only woman who did not cite her redundancy as a motivator for becoming self-employed, was made redundant while on maternity leave with twins, her third and fourth children. Although the redundancy came as a surprise, Julie said she was not planning on returning to work due to financial constraints around child care and holiday care for four young children. This is addressed in the next section.
7.6 Child care

In addition to conflicts with workplace culture, and difficulties negotiating flexible work arrangements, ten of the forced-out entrepreneurs cited the difficulty of finding or affording quality child care as a primary motivator for becoming self-employed (Int. 04, 05, 10, 12, 26, 35, 38, 44, 49, 58). Child care problems were shared by women with younger and older children alike. For example, two women cited the difficulty of finding after school care, especially for older children. Child care was also an issue for women in rural areas, who had to drive long distances to access care, and women in inner city areas, where availability was particularly tight. Child care concerns were particularly acute for women with more than two children (Int. 26, 49); lone mothers (Int. 05, 38, 44); and mothers with severely disabled children.

Grace Jensen's (Int. 58) self-employment narrative was, in essence, a lengthy discourse on the difficulty of securing childcare in a major Australian city. She had been working as a senior executive with a large media company when she became pregnant with her first child, and spent nearly a year searching for a suitable child care arrangement for her son while trying to convince her employer to hold her job:

When I went on maternity leave with [my son] I had anticipated coming back after a year. Actually it was extraordinarily difficult to find day care for him. He was on a number of waiting lists, and I think being a first-time mother, I hadn't really anticipated how hard it really was. So I wasn't quite as pushy. I know a lot of people are very organised and very on top of it from the beginning. I was a bit overwhelmed by having a baby and my life changing, so I wasn't very pushy about it until it came to the crunch, and eight months into my mat-leave I realised it was looking highly unlikely that I would have day care.

I was very fortunate in that [my company], with all its faults, is actually a very family-friendly company. So they extended my maternity leave to the point where I was able to go back three days a week. It took six months of negotiations to come back three days a week. Initially they had said, 'We'd
love you to come back, but under your conditions, your existing contract—which was five days a week.' That just wasn't possible. –GJ/58

After lengthy negotiations and a frantic search for a child care arrangement, Grace returned to work when her son was nearly 18 months old – nearly a year after her starting her search for child care. But, the problems started again when Grace went out on maternity leave a second time. Despite multiple attempts, Grace could not secure a spot for her younger child in the same centre as her elder son, or even in another centre on the same three days. When explaining why she started her own business, Grace began her story with these words:

Ultimately, it was down to child care ... I hadn't anticipated really that it was going to be so problematic getting my second child into day care. It felt impossible really. So what happened was, I resigned formally in November and then I hadn't even considered what I was going to do at that stage. I hadn't thought about whether I was going to consult and set my business up. But I was contacted pretty much immediately by a couple of other people who said, 'Oh, I hear you're available now. Do you want some work?' So that was really fortunate. It fell into my lap. – GJ/58

The problems did not stop when the women's children started school. A lack of after-school care options for her 12-year-old daughter was the primary factor that pushed Rebecca Hopkins (Int. 12) to start her own architecture consultancy:

She was too young to be left at home alone, so I thought, 'Right—now or never.' So I started my own business from home ... And so, because my husband worked full-time as well, I didn't want her coming home to an empty house. – RH/12

Other women had particular caregiving dilemmas. The inability to afford care was a particular issue for lone mothers (Int. 05, 38) and women with more than two children (Int. 47, 49). The inability to find suitable care for a 19-year-old disabled child was the main self-employment driver for Caitlin Hampton (Int. 44), one of two women in the study with a disabled child. Shift workers had similar child care problems. Betty
Foster (Int. 10) and Barbara Fuller (Int. 35), for instance, left salaried nursing jobs because of difficulties finding child care to cover shift work and inflexible rosters. For Barbara, whose husband was frequently overseas for his work, the care dilemma was both practical and philosophical:

It’s just impossible to find child care to cover shift work. For all intents and purposes, more often than not, I’m a single mum with [a husband] who just comes and goes. So, shift work and babysitting is just impossible... As much as I love nursing, it wasn’t worth the angst that it was going to cause. And that’s literally what it would have been. It was just angst, every fortnight with a roster— Who is going to look after my children?

And I didn’t want other people to be responsible for helping me to get out of my problem. It’s not up to someone else to raise my children. And as they get older, they start to need you in different ways. So they like that I am here when they get home from school. And I’m not pushing them out the door really early because I’ve got to get to work, and all those little things. It’s just really nice that I have the opportunity to do that now. – SA/34

Most of the women who mentioned child care as a motivating factor cited it in conjunction with other factors, such as conflicts with workplace culture, or the inability to negotiate flexible working arrangements. But child care nevertheless remained a significant structural impediment to returning to organisational employment for a significant number of women in the study.

7.7 Economic impediments

Apart from child care, living in a remote geographical area and industrial restructuring were the two most commonly cited impediments to participating in organisational employment. The first, living in a rural area, or outside of easy commuting range from a major urban centre, precluded many women in the study from finding interesting work to match their qualifications (Int. 24, 27, 32, 34, 35, 41, 47, 50,
These women mostly spoke about living in a remote or outer suburban area with a degree of positive agency – they had chosen to live where they lived. However, this decision contained a trade-off, which was the necessity of having to create one’s own employment opportunities. Stacey Dowd (Int. 24) spoke about her motivations for starting her own policy consultancy in rural New South Wales:

> It was really about having a career in a small rural community that I enjoyed where there were just so few other opportunities for that sort of career. So that was the initial attraction.

> But once I got into it, it was about having some of the control over the work you did. You know, I don't tender for jobs that I feel ethically or philosophically opposed to. I just have a few key organisations that I work for. We get lots of repeat business I feel really strongly about just working locally. So whilst we’ve been invited to do work in Sydney and what have you, that’s five hours away from me and I just think that kind of defeats the purpose of having a home-based business really for me or what my ideas about that were.

> So yeah, those are really motivating things for staying in the business. And of course the other factor is that it just gives me more flexibility to be with our children. I couldn't have any other salaried employment really. – SD/24

In other cases, women found themselves forced into self-employment as a result of an industry-wide downturn that left them with limited prospects for working as a salaried employee. Shannon Roy (Int. 47) started her own small horticulture business after her work as a geographic information system specialist dried up with a contraction in the Tasmanian forestry industry. For Shannon, the transition to self-employment was the result of multiple push factors, from the restructuring of the forestry industry and her own transition to motherhood to the high cost of child care:

> Most of the employment I had came through the forest industries. So when the collapse of the forest industries occurred, that’s when the work dried up and, I guess, the continuity of my services to the industry.
You know, once you're gone for a year to have a child, you sort of fall off the top of the call list for doing that sort of work... How contracting works is that if you're available that's good, but if you're not available that's sort of like a black mark against your name. Having kids makes you unavailable for work, and so somebody else can step into what you previously had as your niche...

By the time my second child came around the work had started to dry up with all the industry closures. By the time my third child came, it had gone completely. So it sort of galvanised me, and I realised pretty much that I wasn't going to get employment in any of my qualifications. I've got three qualifications, and I couldn't find work. And to find a job that would actually pay enough to give us some kind of profit after child care expenses—basically, I could have gone back to work but it would have only been to pay for child care. – SR/47

Like many other women in this study, Shannon saw self-employment as a way back into the labour market from a position of constraint. Although it began in response to external circumstances outside of her control, Shannon saw self-employment as an opportunity to reassess her priorities and build a more stable financial future:

As far as big businesses and chains are considered at the end of the day the business will take care of itself and not necessarily the employees, so you're basically a disposable asset, so to speak. Whereas with your own business, you can work as hard as you like and the return will be there immediately for you. – SR/47

7.8 The rewards and challenges of self-employment

Like all of the other groups in this study, the women in this category were united in seeing flexibility and autonomy as the single greatest benefits of self-employment. Every single woman in this category used the words “flexible” or “flexibility” to describe the advantages of running their own businesses. The most frequently cited disadvantages, however, were financial instability (Int. 02, 05, 07, 11, 20, 47) and professional isolation (Int. 02, 04, 11, 32, 41; 59). Diana Lewins (Int. 05) expressed the trade-off this way:
I think that the flexibility of it provides me, to a certain degree, outweighs the disadvantages. But I do find it very frustrating that there are women all over the place trying to claw around trying to find something that fits their family situation, often to the detriment to what they actually want to do, you know?

Disadvantages—more the kind of hidden costs, I think of doing things on your own. And the fact that it takes up a little bit more time too. So it’s not just the day to day running of the business itself, it’s all of the behind-the-scenes admin and management. All of that kind of stuff that has to be done outside of those working hours because you can’t possibly fit it in. I guess running your own business does to a certain degree impact on family time.

I don’t have holiday pay. I don’t have sick pay. I rarely contribute to my superannuation. For me there are those things that I can—well, my superannuation that kind of is like a little bit of a dark cloud in the back of my head all the time, thinking, this will come back to bite you in 30 years’ time. But I haven’t got time to really consider that, to be honest. The no holiday pay and no sick pay I can kind of deal with that. That’s something that I don’t like but I’m almost prepared to take the hit for. – DL/05

Emma Wyler (Int. 07), whose position as an administrative assistant was made redundant when her company restructured, gave a similar assessment of advantages and disadvantages of being self-employed:

Okay, a lot more flexibility—a lot more flexibility. I can work when I want to, I can do things that I want to. The only problem is, having that flexibility, if I don’t do the work, I don’t get paid, and there’s nobody there for me to take time off to cover me even when I do want to have time off. – EW/07

Many women also spoke about the isolation of working from home, from listening to the radio for company (Int. 02) to missing the collegial relationships they had once enjoyed in their former workplaces. After nearly a decade of being self-employed, graphic designer Judi Capewell (Int. 32) cited this lack of professional interaction as one of the most oppressive elements of running her own business:
One of the real downsides is that I get up in the morning, I get the kids to school, I come home and I sit down and I work all day. And then I get the kids and then I come home. So there can be a real lack of communication with other adults. The lack of social contact can be quite pressing, just having to seek out clients can be quite stressful. And also, work flow can be an issue because you do the work when it turns up. You’re sort of at the beck and call of the client, if they ring up and say they need something by the end of the week. So I have to decide whether I can reshuffle everything to get that work to them by the end of the week or whether I have to turn the work down. – JC/32

Self-employment gave these women the flexibility they needed to meet the daily requirements of caring for their children. But for many women in the forced-out category, the process of reconciling these trade-offs was sometimes long and difficult. Nadine Wilson (Int. 02), for example, spoke about her personal struggles with self-employment, after being forced to abandon a highly stressful, long-hours job in television to accommodate her family. Despite feeling isolated and cut off from her professional training, Nadine was resolved to find the silver lining in her situation:

What boss is going to let you go to the gym when you just feel like going to the gym? Or let you go early every single day to pick up your kids, or let you go to the school concert, or be completely understanding if one of your children is sick? You know, if you rattle it all off, it’s like, if such a boss existed, of course you’d take a 50 percent pay cut right there and then for such an amazing boss. And then, that person is you. Because you’re working for yourself and you can do all of those things which sound utterly amazing if they were in a formal workplace. – NW/02

7.9 Willingness to return to organisational employment

Of the 35 women in this category, 28 were wholly self-employed (not supplementing their incomes with full-time, part-time or casual employment). The women who were wholly self-employed were evenly split on the question of whether they would ever consider returning to organisational employment. Presented with the question “Would you ever consider working for someone else (as an employee) instead of
being self-employed?” half of the women in this group said “No”, they would not (n=14), the largest proportion of any of the four entrepreneurial narrative types. Nine women said, “Yes”, they would consider returning to organisational employment, and the remaining five said they were “Not Sure”.

Flexibility was the single greatest sticking point for the 14 women who said they would not consider returning to organisational employment. For some women in this group, their experiences in organisational employment had convinced them that no employer could offer them the flexibility they required. This was seen, for example, in Skye Mackay’s (Int. 33) remarks that, “I don’t believe that an employer would be able to provide the flexibility I need with three small children”. This view was shared by others, in comments such as:

I need the flexibility to look after my children. Child care costs are too expensive, especially during school holidays. We do not have any family help and my husband works long hours. So I am the main carer for our children (Int. 49); and,

I have a disabled child who is 25 and requires full-time care. Being self-employed gives me flexibility around her needs (Int. 44).

Some women saw flexibility as a need, rather than a desire, integral to their ability to manage not only the daily practicalities of caregiving, but also the ability to be what they saw as a ‘good’ or effective caregiver. These sentiments are demonstrated in comments such as: “I need the flexibility of being my own boss so I can be an effective parent as well” (Int. 60); “I need the flexibility to change days and times when needed because I am the second income earner; I am the primary carer for our children” (Int. 34); and, “Being employed [as an employee] for me takes away this flexibility and compromises my ability to support my children” (Int. 45).
Autonomy was the second most commonly cited reason among women in this group. For some women, the autonomy they discovered in self-employment was sufficient to keep them there. Verity Templeton (Int. 29), who became self-employed after a new manager revoked her flexible working conditions, said: “I find it highly rewarding and satisfying being the maker of your own destiny and creating something that is your own (Int. 29). This view was echoed by Maggie Lawrence (Int. 50), who also said she would not consider moving back into organisational employment: “I have relished the ability to choose my clients and project sponsors, and really enjoy being the captain of my own ship – even in choppy waters.”

Flexibility was also a major theme for the 14 women who said they would consider returning to organisational employment (n=9), or were unsure (n=5). Many women said they would be tempted to return to organisational employment for greater financial stability, or to reduce their personal stress, but would do so only if the role were sufficiently flexible to accommodate their family responsibilities, or offered significant financial or professional opportunity. The following quotes provide further examples of this shared feeling:

If the right position came up that allowed personal and professional fulfillment, the right income, and flexibility for parental duties, I would return to work (Int. 25);

I need flexibility in order to manage working with looking after my children as I only have access to limited childcare due to there being a lack of available care in the area in which I live (Int. 58)

I would [consider returning to organisational employment] purely for holiday leave, sick leave, continual set wage. On the other hand, I like the flexibility of working for myself (Int. 07); and,

[I] would like the security of employer-paid superannuation and a permanent income stream (Int. 11); and,
Sometimes it would be nice for someone else to have the stress. But really, the thing I love to do most is to run my own show, around my family activities (Int. 30).

Regardless of whether they women said they would or would not consider returning to organisational employment, flexibility to accommodate family responsibilities was the major issue for the women in this group. Some said they would consider returning to organisational employment if the role were sufficiently flexible and challenging; for others however, the negative experiences they had encountered as employee mothers had convinced them that no employer could accommodate the flexibility they required, leaving self-employment as their only viable option.

7.10 Conclusion

The majority of the women in this study, 58 percent of the sample, were pressed into self-employment by gendered barriers within organisations or structural impediments beyond their control. These factors, combined with the logistical and perceived moral obligations of motherhood, acted to push the women out of organisational employment in the first instance, leaving self-employment as their only viable or attractive option in the labour market. Among the forced-out entrepreneurs, only a relatively small number experienced traditional push factors such as forced job loss or lack of employment options due to economic conditions (Still & Walker 2006; Gilad & Levine 1986). The vast majority were pushed out of organisational employment by other, less quantifiable factors, including: gendered conflicts with organisational culture (Mallon & Cohen 2001; Hughes 2005, 2003); glass ceiling barriers (Buttnier & Moore 1997); poor quality part-time work (Knörr 2011; Mattis 2004); inflexible working arrangements (McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Hughes 2005; Mattis 2004); lack
of affordable or accessible child care (Mattis 2004); geographical remoteness (Newton, Wood & Gottschalk 2003); job loss due to involuntary redundancy (Gilad & Levine 1986; Cooper & Dunkelberg 1986); and limited employment options due to industrial restructuring (Gilad & Levine 1986; Cooper & Dunkelberg 1986).
Chapter Eight:

Analysis and Discussion

8.1 Introduction

This study has sought to understand the motivations of women who become self-employed after motherhood. As mentioned in Chapter One, women with young children engage in self-employment at significantly higher rates than other working women in Australia. On average, 23.4 percent of women with children under the age of 12 engage in self-employment (Baxter 2013a), compared to around 9 percent of all employed females (ABS 2015, 2013a). Nevertheless, with the exception of a handful of articles from Britain and Europe (Carrigan & Duberley 2013; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Ekinsmyth 2013a, 2013b, 2011; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013), and one from Australia (Nel, Martiz & Thongprovati 2010) the phenomenon of maternal self-employment, as opposed to women’s self-employment more generally, has received little scholarly attention.

Much of the sociological literature on women, work, and family, both in Australia and internationally, has focussed largely on the factors that influence women’s employment within organisations. In particular, this body of research has examined women’s disproportionate concentration in part-time or casual employment (Corby & Stanworth 2009; Crompton & Harris 1998; Fagan 2001; Hakim 2006, 2002, 2000, 1995; Leahy & Doughney 2006; McRae 2003; Moen & Yu 2000; Walsh 1999; Wicks, Mishra & Milne 2002), the scarring or negative effects on women’s careers of motherhood and/or time out of the workforce (Budig, Misra & Boeckmann 2012; Budig & England 2001;
Correll, Benard & Paik 2007; Crittenden 2001; Livermore, Rodgers & Siminski 2011), and the ways in which women with children negotiate – or decide between – their paid work and family responsibilities (Blair-Loy 2003; Gerson 2009, 1986; J. C. Williams 2000), as seen in the debate over why, and to what extent, women ‘opt out’ of paid employment after motherhood (Belkin 2003; Cabrera 2007; Stone 2007).

Self-employment, or entrepreneurship, has largely been overlooked in this debate. Conversely, studies of entrepreneurial motivation, particularly in Australia, have generally treated the process of business creation as wholly separate from domestic considerations, and have thus ignored the effects of family structures, household expectations, and the socio-cultural environment on the self-employment transition. Large-scale quantitative studies of entrepreneurial motivation have also tended to rely on narrow definitions of push and pull that potentially obscure the gendered ambiguities of the start-up process, such as the fact that women are significantly more likely than men to say that family or household factors were a major motivator, even if they saw themselves as predominantly ‘pulled’ to self-employment (Dawson & Henley 2012; Hughes 2006; Kirkwood 2009).

Importantly then, this study has sought to fill this gap in the literature by applying the dominant explanations from the sociological literature on women, work, and family and the dominant explanations on entrepreneurial motivation to the career narratives of 60 women who became self-employed after falling pregnant or having children. In so doing, this study contributes to the entrepreneurship literature by acknowledging and examining the family and household dynamics in which the start-up process is embedded (de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007; Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; Aldrich & Cliff 2003; Rouse & Kitching 2006; Rouse, Treanor & Fleck 2013). Although
this study is based in Australia, its findings are potentially relevant in other contexts where women with young children have been found to engage in self-employment. It also adds to theoretical understanding by suggesting a new conceptual model to explain the factors that motivate some women to undertake the transition to self-employment.

The central research question proposed by this study was:

*What motivates some women to become self-employed after motherhood?*

Using the literature to apply a theoretically-informed thematic analysis to the participants’ career narratives, the two sub-questions were:

i. In terms of the dominant explanations offered by the sociological literature on women, work, and family are women who make the transition to self-employment after motherhood motivated by career or family concerns, or both? Is the transition a function of choice, or constraint?

ii. In terms of the dominant explanations offered by the entrepreneurial literature, are women who become self-employed after motherhood *pulled* by the intrinsic benefits of entrepreneurship, or are they *pushed* into self-employment by gendered barriers or structural constraints?

### 8.2 A conceptual model of maternal self-employment

Recent studies which have sought to explore women’s experiences or time-use in self-employment have argued that mothers who become self-employed do so in order to accommodate their family responsibilities, or to bring their work and family responsibilities into a single sphere (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley &
This study elaborates on these previous studies by investigating women’s motivations for becoming self-employed, as opposed to other forms of employment. The evidence presented in the preceding chapters shows that although family considerations played a key role in how the women in the sample constructed their business activities once they were self-employed, their initial motivations for becoming self-employed were heterogeneous, and did not follow a narrow, family-driven rationale. While the family dimension was important to every woman in the study, the need or desire to accommodate family responsibilities alone did not explain the women’s motivations. For many women in this study, self-employment was not merely a stopgap or ‘convenience’ solution to a period in their life-course when the ability to sustain organisational employment was difficult due to family commitments, as has been suggested by some (Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013; Rouse & Kitching 2006). Rather, many women saw self-employment as the only way to advance or continue careers that had been curtailed by rigid or inflexible organisational environments. In this regard, motherhood was a trigger, but it was not the motivator. By applying the insights from the entrepreneurship and work-family literature, this research explores these nuances.

As this research was concerned with examining mothers’ self-employment decisions in light of the extant literature on entrepreneurial motivation and women, work, and family, the women’s narratives were analysed with a particular focus on their stated preferences for career or family (Hakim 1995, 2000, 2002, 2006), as well as structural, social, and institutional constraints (McRae 2003; Crompton & Harris 1998; Corby & Stanworth 2009; Moen & Yu 2000; Pocock 2003), in order to develop a more
gendered understanding of push and pull motivations (Hughes 2003, 2005, 2006; Kirkwood 2009; Dawson & Henley 2012). Based on this theoretically-informed framework, which was outlined in Chapter Three, four distinct entrepreneurial profiles emerged, which were further developed thematically in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven.

To recap, however, the four motivational profiles identified were:

i. *Family-focused entrepreneurs*, who were pulled into self-employment by their desire to provide exclusive, home-based maternal care for their young children, while supplementing the household income;

ii. *Career-focused entrepreneurs*, who chose self-employment purposefully and deliberately, motivated by a desire for professional autonomy, career advancement, financial gain, or status;

iii. *Opt-in entrepreneurs*, who chose self-employment voluntarily, motivated mainly by a desire to create meaningful, rewarding work that did not impinge on family life; and

iv. *Forced-out entrepreneurs*, who felt pressed or pushed into entrepreneurship by gendered barriers within organisations or other structural constraints, and saw self-employment as their only viable employment option in the labour market.
The four groups are modelled in Figure 8.1.

**Figure 8.1  Entrepreneurial motivations of self-employed mothers**

The presentation of the four groups in relation to the horizontal, career-family axis represents the extent to which the women’s narratives were dominated by career- or family-focused motivations, or some combination of the two. That is, was becoming self-employed a choice the women made purposefully and consciously, to maximise certain career- or family-related goals, as Hakim’s (2000, 2002, 2006) preference theory might suggest? Or was it was a constrained, adaptive, or ‘satisficing’ response to a gendered environment, as has been suggested by other authors (Corby & Stanworth 2009; Crompton & Harris 1998; Leahy & Doughney 2006; McRae 2003; Moen & Yu 2000; Pocock 2003)? The model illustrates that only a minority of women in the sample were motivated primarily by a dominant preference for career or family. Rather, for the
majority, the transition to self-employment was motivated by a combination of, or some conflict between, their aspirations for career and family.

Indeed, very few women in this study were motivated solely by family-related preferences. Similarly, very few women in this study were pulled into self-employment primarily by career-related preferences. Rather, the perceived inability of organisations to create or accommodate professional roles that were both flexible and rewarding acted to drive many women out of organisational employment, although the degree of willingness expressed in this transition varied. Rather than “treading water” (Int. 57) in part-time jobs that had flexibility but were inherently unchallenging, or persisting in challenging full-time jobs that were inherently inflexible, the majority of women in this study saw self-employment as the only way to create jobs that were both challenging from a career perspective and family-friendly.

The presentation of the four groups in relation to the vertical push-pull axis represents the extent to which the women described their transition to entrepreneurship as a proactive and deliberate strategy (pull); or a reluctant and reactive response (push). The drawing, which is not intended as a scale model, illustrates where the women in the study fell on Dawson and Henley’s “spectrum of willingness” (2012, p.698) in the transition to self-employment. That is, were the women pulled to self-employment willingly and purposefully, lured by the intrinsic benefits of entrepreneurship, such as autonomy, flexibility, and self-fulfilment? Or were they pushed into self-employment reluctantly, in response to seemingly intractable barriers beyond their control? The distribution of the four groups along the vertical push-pull axis shows that, for some, the move to self-employment was a willing and deliberate choice; for many, however, it was a more reactive, reluctant move.
This model, in useful contrast to earlier explanations, represents the diversity of motivations the women in the sample ascribed to their self-employment transition; it does not represent static, unyielding orientations to entrepreneurship, career, or family. This study acknowledges, as have others, that entrepreneurial motivations (Carter & Cannon 1992) and career orientations (Crompton & Harris 1998; McRae 2003; van Wanrooy 2005; Wicks, Mishra & Milne 2002) can and frequently do shift over time, and that entrepreneurial motives should be understood in the context of an individual’s position in the wider economic and social environment (Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007), the household (Allen & Truman 1993), and in the life course (Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013). This study acknowledges that a woman may start her business with the family-focused intention of providing exclusive care of her young children, but later become more career-focused once her children are older, or with the growth of her business. Alternately, a woman who is forced into entrepreneurship after motherhood by her inability to negotiate flexible working conditions may later find that she has become attached to the lifestyle benefits of entrepreneurship and opt in to continued self-employment even after her need for flexible working hours subsides. At any point, a woman might decide to close or sell her business and return to organisational employment, a dynamic which is not represented in this study but is worthy of further research. Thus, the model illustrates the motivational underpinnings of the entrepreneurial process, and is not a fixed or static typology.

The remainder of this chapter elaborates on the conceptual model, followed by a detailed analysis of each of the four entrepreneurial profiles, their characteristics, and their placement within the model.
8.2.1 Elaboration of the model

It is widely accepted that entrepreneurs rarely start new ventures on the basis of push factors or pull factors alone. Like other in-depth studies of entrepreneurial motivation in women, this study finds that entrepreneurs are generally motivated by a confluence of push and pull factors that can be ambiguous and difficult to unravel (Hughes 2005, 2006, 2003; Kirkwood 2009; Orhan 2005; Orhan & Scott 2001). Qualitative studies such as this one play an important role in untangling those motivations by exploring the richness and complexity of the self-employment transition. This study makes an important contribution to the literature in this regard, using a theoretically-informed thematic narrative analysis to highlight the ambiguities of push and pull that have sometimes been obscured in quantitative studies (the weaknesses of quantitative push-pull studies is discussed extensively in Section 2.3.3). This research demonstrates the importance of context in understanding whether women are more apt to be pulled into self-employment voluntarily (by commonly accepted pull factors such as autonomy, independence, or flexibility), as some quantitative studies of women’s entrepreneurship in Australia have suggested (Bennett & Dann 2000; Dann & Bennett 2005; Still & Walker 2006) or whether they are more likely to be pushed into self-employment reluctantly by the relative absence of these factors in organisational employment, as other studies have suggested (Mallon & Cohen 2001; Mattis 2004).

This study is unique in classifying self-employed mothers by their motivational profiles. It is not, however, the first attempt to classify female entrepreneurs by type. These previous typologies are useful in classifying the way female entrepreneurs engage in their businesses, but often obscure the circumstances that led the women to self-employment in the first place. That is, previous typologies help us understand how
these women engaged in their businesses, but do not fully capture the question of why they made the transition to self-employment in the first place.

For example, some of the women in the sample can be seen as *convenience entrepreneurs* (Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013), running stopgap businesses around their caregiving responsibilities while maintaining long-term aspirations for employment careers. Others bear some similarity to the *domestic traders* identified by Goffee and Scase (1985) or the *dualists* identified by Cromie and Hayes (1988), running low-growth, low-ambition businesses designed and created to provide a measure of personal satisfaction or fulfilment while the women attended to their household responsibilities. Others were more akin to the *accidentalists* identified by Carter and Cannon (1992), who fell into self-employment by chance, after a series of organisational setbacks. Others were *innovators* (Goffee & Scase 1985; Cromie & Hayes 1988), *achievers* (Carter & Cannon 1992), or *corporate climbers* (Moore & Buttner 1997), who established high-ambition enterprises in response to – or in revolt against (Sullivan et al. 2007)– the frustrations and disappointments they experienced within organisations. Although some of these findings are applicable here, none of these earlier typologies captures the breadth of motivations found in the present study. This study makes an important contribution to the literature by illuminating both the primary career-family objectives and the degree of willingness experienced in the transition to self-employment after motherhood.

Finally, in using the women’s own narratives to classify the study participants into motivational categories, this study does not presume to question whether women who deliberately organised their working lives around their children, or otherwise prioritised the work of motherhood over their paid employment, were exercising their
true or ‘pure’ preferences or blindly fulfilling their socially-ordained gender roles. Conversely, the model does not attempt to judge whether women who expressed career-centred motivations for entrepreneurship were subconsciously responding to a pervasive economic rationalism that valorises paid employment over caregiving.

These points have been extensively discussed in the literature (see, for example, Brush 1996; de Beauvoir 1949; Folbre 2001; Manne 2005; Maushart 1997; de Marneffe 2004), and are certainly worthy of further debate. However, it is beyond the scope of the present study to resolve this question. This research is based on women’s self-reported motivations for combining self-employment with motherhood. As such, it shares Ekinsmyth’s view that, “it is patronising to suggest that mothers think they have choice, but don’t really; or that they don’t really have a preference for the mother role even though they think they do,” (2013a, p.541), just as it would be patronising to suggest that career-focused women are unduly influenced by economic rationalities they do not fully comprehend, or that they are less attached to their children. The model, which is grounded in the women’s own perceptions of their experiences and motivations, is therefore neutral on the merits of these gendered subjectivities.

8.3 Family-focused entrepreneurs: discussion

Of all the motivational groups, the family-focused entrepreneurs aspired to the most traditional ideal of motherhood, characterised by their desire to provide exclusive maternal care of their young children, which was sometimes accompanied by a philosophical opposition to using formal, centre-based care. The decision to quit organisational employment and become self-employed was a conscious expression of their preference for “the work of motherhood” over paid employment, a finding that has
also been made by Ekinsmyth (2013a, p.541) in her study of British ‘mumpreneurs’. Rather than reacting to limited options in the labour market, or external constraints such as a lack of child care or part-time employment options, the women in this group deliberately set out to find and create businesses that would allow them to contribute to their household incomes while providing exclusive care of their own children.

The family-focused entrepreneurs were motivated mainly by their desire to enact a highly “intensive” (Hays 1996; Lupton 2000; Hattery 2001), traditional ideal of motherhood, characterised by high levels of physical and emotional proximity. The women spoke about the ability to work from home while caring for their children as an “opportunity” (Int. 17, 37) and a “priority” (Int. 39). But some of the women also spoke about maternal care in terms of obligation. This was expressed, for example, in statements such as, “If you’re going to have kids you might as well look after them” (Int. 22), and their reflections on the “constant pressure on women to do the right thing” (Int. 39) with respect to their children.

This preference for, or philosophical commitment to, providing exclusive maternal care did not preclude the women’s attachment to paid work, however. Consistent with Duberley and Carrigan’s (2013) exploration of maternal self-employment in Britain, the family-focused entrepreneurs also spoke of wanting to nurture an identity beyond ‘just a stay-at-home mum’, a persona they associated with isolation, boredom, and narrowed interest or intellect. The family-focused entrepreneurs spoke of the importance of avoiding “that nappy brain” or “baby brain” (Int. 37), and not wanting to live in a “baby bubble” (Int. 22), go “stir crazy” (Int. 09), or sit “at home five days a week and not work” (Int. 39). Their businesses provided a much-needed

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19 Australian slang for ‘diaper brain’.
reprieve from the work of motherhood – so-called “me-time” (Int. 17) – and a welcome level of intellectual “stimulation” (Int. 39) or “challenge” (Int. 22), even if running their businesses sometimes brought additional stresses into their lives.

In many ways, the family-focused entrepreneurs appear to fit Jayawarna et al.’s (2011) classification of convenience entrepreneurs: women who start their own businesses to combine paid work with domestic responsibilities, with the flexibility to work from home a major factor in the start-up decision. The family-focused entrepreneurs’ overall willingness to consider returning to organisational employment generally aligns with Jayawarna et al.’s (2011) proposition that convenience entrepreneurs have a lower level of commitment to their businesses over the long term, tending to regard their enterprises as a stopgap solution during a period in the life-course when their ability to participate in organisational employment is constrained by caregiving demands. However, the two more established business owners in this group, Mandy Franklin (Int. 22) and Lucy Kingman (Int. 39), both expressed high ambitions for the growth and expansion of their businesses, and strong ambivalence about returning to organisational employment, suggesting that convenience entrepreneurship can convert to more ambitious entrepreneurship over time.

In their questionnaire responses, all of the women in this group were generally open to the idea of returning to organisational employment at some point in the future (indeed, none of the women in this group said they would not consider returning), although they also expressed some ambivalence. Shauna Davis (Int. 09) said she would consider returning to organisational employment because “it’s easier working for someone else” than being self-employed. However, she also said she would consider hiring employees if her business grew beyond her ability to manage it, because: “I’d
rather have a successful business with a little extra work”, than deliberately contain business growth. Lucy Kingman (Int. 39), whose businesses was already generating a six-figure income, said she planned to expand her business considerably at some point in the future, but was actively containing that growth “because of my kids”. Likewise, Mandy Franklin (Int. 22) said that although she started out with a “very small fry mind”, her ambitions had been stoked with the success of her business, which was “nothing compared to what I want to do in the future”, a desire for profit and growth that “motivates me and keeps me going”. Of course, these responses represent only a snapshot of the women's attitudes with respect to their long-term intentions, but these responses challenge the assertion that women who make employment choices for family-focused reasons – e.g. Jayawarna et al.’s (2011) convenience entrepreneurs, or Hakim’s (2006, 2002, 2000) home-centred or adaptive women – cannot simultaneously hold strong subjective attachment to paid work.

In many ways the family-focused entrepreneurs blurred the distinction between Hakim’s (2006, 2002, 2000) home-centred and adaptive categories. Four of the five family-focused entrepreneurs left well-paying, flexible jobs in order to provide exclusive maternal care of their children, a pattern that appears to align with Hakim’s assertion that home-centred women prioritise family and children over paid work, and thus may not be responsive to employment or social policies designed to encourage women into the workplace. Unlike Hakim’s home-centred women, however, the family-focused entrepreneurs expressed a desire to work, or to cultivate a work-identity – to be more than ‘just a stay-at-home mum’ – and deliberately sought out opportunities that would allow them to work from home, not just to supplement the household income, but also to advance their own psychological and personal well-being.
In this regard, the family-focused entrepreneurs were more similar to Hakim’s adaptive women; they wanted to participate in paid work but were more interested in achieving a balanced lifestyle, rather than pursuing what Hakim has called a “work career” (2002, p.436). In contrast to Hakim’s assertion that women’s preferences for career and family are fixed and immutable, however, many of the women in this group held strong ambitions for their businesses alongside their explicitly home-centred goals. They did not see motherhood and career ambition as mutually exclusive, at least over the long term. They perceived themselves as motivated and successful businesswomen who were temporarily holding their ambitions in check while their children were young. This was reflected in Lucy Kingman’s comment: “I still want to work and have my own business and be successful, but I don’t want that to be at the expense of the kids”.

In this respect, the family-focused entrepreneurs were more similar to the conventional businesswomen proposed by Goffee and Scase (1985) in their early typology of female entrepreneurs. Like the conventionalals, the family-focused entrepreneurs demonstrated both a high attachment to conventional gender roles, reflected in their preference for traditional motherhood and exclusive, home-based maternal care, and their high attachment to conventional entrepreneurial ideals, reflected in their relatively strong ambitions for business growth. The family-focused entrepreneurs differed from the conventionalals, however, in that they were not driven to self-employment by a lack of other alternatives in the labour market. The transition was motivated mainly by the women’s preference for a more family-orientated life, not by financial necessity or a lack of child care options.
For the family-focused entrepreneurs, self-employment offered a way to participate in the labour force that was both personally satisfying and congruent with public opinion. Attitudinal surveys in Australia have found that public support for maternal employment is significantly higher if the mother works from home, regardless of the number of hours worked. In a nationally-representative survey of 1,314 Australians, Kelley et al. (2010) found that only 25 percent of people approve (either strongly or mildly) of mothers of young children working full-time outside the home, compared to 56 percent of Australians who approve of mothers engaging in full-time employment from home. Support is generally higher for mothers engaging in part-time work, but follows a similar pattern, with 53 percent approving of mothers working part-time outside the home, compared to 81 percent who approve of mothers working part-time from home. Working from home allowed the family-focused entrepreneurs a way to stay connected to paid work, while assuaging the “paranoia” and “constant pressure” on mothers to do “everything right” of which Lucy Kingman spoke.

The family-focused entrepreneurs generally described themselves in terms of opportunity maximisation. Self-employment was a choice the women in this group made consciously and deliberately to advance their goal of providing exclusive, maternal care of their children, while providing some supplementary income to “pay for the nicer things” (Int. 22). Being self-employed allowed them to contribute to their households financially, while retaining a connection to paid work and cultivating a career identity, without having to compromise their commitment to traditional motherhood by seeking employment outside the home. Working from home allowed these women to earn some income, while providing their children a home-centred experience that was “the same as if I wasn’t working” (Int. 39).
Seen through the lens of gender, however, the family-focused entrepreneurs can also be seen as ‘satisficers’, in the sense advanced by Chafetz and Hagan (1996, p.213). That is, the family-focused entrepreneurs were attempting to balance two socially-valued, but competing goal sets: the social and psychological benefits of interpersonal relationships, on the one hand, and the social and economic benefits of engaging in paid employment, on the other. Consistent with Duberley and Carrigan’s (2013) examination of the career identities of British ‘mumpreneurs’, the women in this group saw self-employment as a way to fulfil their ideals of ‘good’ motherhood, without being ‘just a stay-at-home-mum’.

The family-focused entrepreneurs, who comprised just 8 percent of the sample, conceived their businesses as a means to an end: a way to realise their preference for exclusive maternal care of their children, while supplementing the household income. Nevertheless, job satisfaction, commercial success, and personal ambition were secondary benefits that sometimes emerged as the women’s businesses expanded and grew. This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 8.2, which shows that although the primary motivator of the family-focused entrepreneurs was domestically-orientated, engagement in self-employment provided important career-related benefits as well.
The family-focused entrepreneurs (n=5) appear in the upper right-hand quadrant of the model because they described self-employment as a choice they made consciously, deliberately, and proactively (thus reflecting the pull motivator) in order to provide exclusive, home-based maternal care for their young children, while supplementing the household income. As stated above, the financial motive in this group did not manifest as an intrinsic career-related ambition, but as a desire to contribute financially to the household without having to engage in paid employment outside the home (thus reflecting the family motivator).

Overall, the family-focused entrepreneurs can be seen as pull-factor or opportunity entrepreneurs, in that they were drawn into entrepreneurship by the prospect of realising some intrinsic goal – fulfilling their preference for a more domestic or family-
orientated life – rather than necessity entrepreneurs, driven by a lack of real or perceived alternatives in the labour market (Amoros & Bosma 2013; Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros 2011; Kelley et al. 2013; Reynolds et al. 2002). For these women, the decision to become self-employed was largely a proactive choice – though sometimes made within the boundary of constraints, either physical, such as having limited opportunities for organisational employment due to geographical constraints (as in Int. 22), or philosophical (as in Int. 22 and 39).

### 8.4 Career-focused entrepreneurs: discussion

The career-focused entrepreneurs described the transition to self-employment as a choice they made willingly and consciously to advance certain professional, or career-related, objectives. The smallest of the four entrepreneurial profiles in this study, the career-focused entrepreneurs described their decision to start their businesses, or expand existing ones (Int. 46), as a conscious choice, a way to realise an “opportunity” (Int. 16, 46) or “control” (Int. 01, 08) their professional or financial “destinies” (Int. 01, 08). Although the transition to self-employment was an intentional and deliberate move, it was not necessarily borne of longstanding entrepreneurial drives or desires.

The women in this group were not entrepreneurs-in-waiting, as defined by Mallon and Cohen (2001). That is, they were not motivated by long-standing entrepreneurial aspirations, nor had they used organisational employment as deliberate training grounds for their own business endeavours. In almost every case, the transition to self-employment was motivated by some external trigger. With the exception of Lola Chen (Int. 46), who purchased a partnership in an existing business, all of the women in this group were motivated, in part, by some degree of dissatisfaction or disillusionment.
with their former employers, including: management conflicts unrelated to gender (Int. 01, 16); insufficient challenge or unsatisfactory work (Int. 01, 16); or a lack of stable or sufficient remuneration (Int. 08). The women in this group perceived that they had the educational and career capital to secure other forms of salaried employment, but intentionally opted for self-employment as the more autonomous and potentially lucrative career path.

The career-focused entrepreneurs largely fit Hakim’s profile of the career-centred woman (2006, 2002, 2000); they were all highly ambitious women who had made substantial investments in their education and training and were focused on long-term professional and financial advancement. In their ambitious approach to their careers and opportunity-driven motives, the women in this group also shared some similarities with the (mostly childless, unmarried) innovative entrepreneurs identified by Cromie and Hayes (1988) and Goffee and Scase (1988) and the corporate climbers of Buttner and Moore (1997). However, unlike the women in these early typologies, the career-focused entrepreneurs did not ascribe their motivations to glass-ceiling constraints or other gendered barriers within organisations.

By and large, the women in this group had been able to continue advancing within their careers, reaching the ranks of senior executive (Int. 01), academic researcher (Int. 08), principal architect (Int. 16), and partner of a mid-sized firm (Int. 46), even after the onset of pregnancy or the birth of their children. Penny Butler-Evans, for example, described how she was able to continue to progress in her career as an architect in the health-care field, despite two periods of maternity leave and cycling in and out of part-time work:
They were very good at doing and wanting to have more women in the workplace. They were very keen contributors to that. Because I was choosing to specialise in health, there was a lot of work and not many people who knew how to do that. So it was pretty much they were desperate to get what they could out of me [laughs] – PBE/16

The lack of gendered barriers experienced by these women may also be explained by their willingness and financial ability to fulfil the ‘ideal’ (J. C. Williams 2000) or ‘devoted’ (Blair-Loy 2003) worker requirements of their former workplaces. Pauline Heatherton used a full-time nanny to support her ability to travel, sometimes for weeks at a time, as a corporate executive for a large real-estate firm. Lola Chen relied on her parents and an extended-hours child care centre to work long, full-time hours in her accountancy firm. Unlike the majority of women in this study, the career-focused entrepreneurs were not motivated to self-employment by their desire to work part-time hours, or to fit their full-time hours around their children’s daily schedules. The women in this group said they “never considered working part-time” (Int. 01), or felt “no hesitancy” (Int. 46) about returning to full-time work after the arrival of their children.

Although none of the women in this group ascribed explicitly family-related motives to their self-employment transitions, closer examination of the women’s narratives suggests that family or household dynamics were nevertheless important influences in the way the women organised their businesses. Some of the women in this group spoke, for example, of making the decision to become self-employed or developing business plans in consultation with a husband or spouse (Int. 01, 16), relying on a husband or spouse as the primary caregiver (Int. 01, 16), or managing long full-time working hours outside the home by sharing child care responsibilities with a husband and/or extended family members (Int. 46). The fact that the women in this group had incomes large enough to support the use of private nannies and full-time long
day care was another factor in the women’s ability to pursue their professional ambitions. This is consistent with Moen and Yu (2000), who argue that women’s movements in the labour market do not reflect personal preferences alone, but are a function of household-level negotiations. It is also consistent with the assertions of de Bruin et al. (2007) and Brush et al. (2009), who argue that family and household dynamics play an important role in the entrepreneurial process.

The work of motherhood was also a consideration in the women’s organisation of their businesses. Three of the career-focused entrepreneurs spoke extensively about how self-employment allowed them to ‘be there’ or ‘be available’ for their children in ways they had been unable to as organisational employees. At one point in her interview, for example, Pauline Heatherton (Int. 01) recalled an instance, during a period of frequent overseas travel in her years as a corporate executive, in which a group of mothers at her son’s primary school mistook her for the new nanny. Although she was “mortified” at this recollection, Pauline said she never once considered transitioning to part-time employment; a move she perceived would be detrimental to her overall career. The ability to control her own hours and workload was just one of many factors in favour of setting up her own enterprise over finding a new organisational role:

I wanted to make sure that I was, you know, able to attend the things that I wanted at his school, which I wasn’t able to do in his primary school, because I was working for a large corporate. We didn’t have that flexibility. – PH/01

Similarly, Katrina Miller (Int. 08), who cited financial gain as her primary motivation for starting her business, spoke about the freedom and flexibility she discovered in self-employment, particularly in relation to her children. She spoke of
being able to attend “the Easter parade, or school concerts, or the school fete” without anyone “being disapproving” or questioning her commitment to her work. Even Penny Butler-Evans (Int. 16), who explicitly stated that her reasons for going into business had “nothing to do” with her children, described how she organised her working hours around her desire to “be there” for particular moments in her children’s lives:

The way that I work and the hours that I work, I choose that based on wanting to be there to help them with their homework and teach them musical instruments and all that kind of stuff, and just do school excursions and do that kind of thing. – PBE/16

Building on Hays’ (1996) concept of “intensive mothering”, which has been advanced by Liss et al. (2013), Hattery (2001), and Lupton (2000), Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001) argue that the modern conceptualisation of ‘good’ motherhood is constructed primarily around notions of maternal ‘availability’ and ‘accessibility’. That is, the picture of “positive motherhood and femininity is constructed within a framework where the child stands constantly at the centre” (2001, p.425). In this context, a career-focused or work-centred (Hakim 2006, 2002, 2000) mother, who works full-time or otherwise prioritises her life outside the family is “constantly at risk of having her status as a woman and mother being questioned” (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson 2001, p.425) – sometimes quite literally, as illustrated in Pauline Heatherton’s experience of being mistaken for the nanny.

Some mothers have been found to engage with this discourse of ‘availability’ and ‘accessibility’ by altering their working hours or temporarily retreating from the workplace when their children are young (Hattery 2001). In their study of the narrative construction of motherhood in the United States, however, Johnston and Swanson (2007, 2006) argue that women reconstruct the meaning of ‘availability’ and
‘accessibility’ according to their working status. Thus, a mother who engages in the exclusive care of her children might emphasise the *quantity* of time she spends with her children, whereas a full-time working mother might emphasise the *quality* of time. But these studies, like many other sociological studies of women, work, and family, generally assume an employment context where the woman has relatively little control over her working hours or working environment.

Self-employment, in contrast, provided the women in this study with different avenues to engage with the dominant conceptualisation of ‘good’ motherhood. For the *career-focused entrepreneurs*, the desire to fulfil a ‘good’ mother ideal was not the primary driver to self-employment, as it was for the *family-focused entrepreneurs*. However, the newfound autonomy and flexibility many of the *career-focused* women discovered in self-employment gave them the ability to 'be there' or 'be available' for their children in ways they had been unable to as organisational employees. Self-employment allowed these women to access the discourse of ‘good’ motherhood without hampering their professional or financial ambitions.

For the *family-focused entrepreneurs*, in contrast, self-employment offered a way to access the discourse of economic productivity – to be ‘more than just a stay-at-home mum’ – while accommodating their desire to fulfil a highly intensive ideal of maternal care. For both, self-employment offered different pathways to the same goal: the ability to balance the social, psychological, and economic benefits of paid employment against the socially-acceptable requirements of ‘good’ motherhood.

In conclusion, the *career-focused entrepreneurs* provided self-employment narratives that were dominated by traditional pull factors, chiefly: the desire for professional autonomy, or control over one’s work (Bennett & Dann 2000; Still &
Walker 2006; Kirkwood 2009; Dawson & Henley 2012); the desire for challenging work (Hughes 2005; Mainiero & Sullivan 2006; Sullivan et al. 2007; Dawson & Henley 2012); the desire for financial gain (Bennett & Dann 2000; Kirkwood 2009); and the desire for greater professional status (Carter & Cannon 1992; Kariv 2011).

Nevertheless, for three out of the four women in this group, the transition to self-employment was triggered, in part, by some degree of dissatisfaction or disillusionment with organisational employment, although not related to glass ceiling constraints or gendered barriers. Among the women in this study, the career-focused entrepreneurs were the least likely to cite family-related factors as primary drivers in the transition. By providing the benefits of flexibility and autonomy, however, self-employment allowed these women to access the dominant conceptualisation of ‘good’ motherhood – accessibility and availability – in ways they had not been able to as organisational employees, a dynamic illustrated in Figure 8.3.
The career-focused entrepreneurs (n=4) are presented in the upper left-hand quadrant of the pyramid because the women in this group described self-employment as a deliberate and willing choice (thus reflecting the pull motivator), motivated by work-related factors (thus reflecting the career motive). In this way they are the opposite of the family-focused entrepreneurs. The career-focused entrepreneurs can be seen as opportunity entrepreneurs described by (Reynolds et al. 2002), pulled to self-employment by a desire to maximise their professional or career-related goals, rather than in response to a lack of (real or perceived) options in the labour market.
8.5 Opt-in entrepreneurs: discussion

The second-largest group in the study, comprising 27 percent of the sample, were the opt-in entrepreneurs. The women in this group voluntarily opted out of organisational employment and into self-employment, motivated by a combination of career- and family-related factors. For the most part, the women in this group were driven to entrepreneurship by a desire to create meaningful and personally fulfilling employment, while retaining maximum flexibility to work around their family responsibilities. Although most of the women in this group framed self-employment as a deliberate and conscious choice, it was clear that many saw the conditions of organisational employment – the implicit and explicit demands of being an ‘ideal’ (J. C. Williams 2000) or ‘devoted’ (Blair-Loy 2003) worker – to be fundamentally incompatible with their desire to be ‘available’ and ‘accessible’ (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson 2001, p.425) in their children’s daily lives. Self-employment, in contrast, offered the promise of a more fulfilling or authentic (Mainiero & Sullivan 2006; Sullivan et al. 2007) life, free from the gendered hassles and hurdles of organisations (McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013) which constrained their ability to enact a particular ideal of motherhood.

Consistent with the small body of literature on maternal self-employment that has begun to emerge outside Australia (Ekinsmyth 2013a; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013), the opt-in entrepreneurs generally regarded their transition to self-employment as a positive choice, given their circumstances and situation in the life course. Like the family-focused entrepreneurs, the opt-in entrepreneurs spoke about their shifting priorities – away from paid work and toward motherhood – as a primary motivator to self-employment. This was reflected in
comments such as: “It’s all about the kids now” (Int. 03), and “Your priorities change when you become a parent” (Int. 18), and “I have this amazing child, and I’ve got this wonderful life. I don’t need to go back to that. I don’t care how much they’re going to pay me” (Int. 13).

Embedded in the narratives of both the opt-in entrepreneurs and the family-focused entrepreneurs was a shared (and largely unquestioned) belief in the primacy of the mother’s role in raising children, seen in comments such as not wanting to “be like the traditional Dad” (Int. 13) who pays the bills but never sees his children, or fitting one’s paid work around the children being a “really big important thing” (Int. 36) or “the most important thing” (Int. 56). However, the opt-in entrepreneurs did not express the same attachment to a traditional motherhood ideal as the family-focused entrepreneurs, nor were they driven by an opposition to using formal child care, or a lack of child care options. Rather, the opt-in entrepreneurs were motivated by a desire to balance their professional ambitions against their desire to be actively involved in the daily care of their children – to be present before and after school or child care, and be available or ‘on call’ as needed – but not necessarily to provide full-time, exclusive maternal care.

Many of the women in this group saw the explicit and implicit demands of organisational employment as fundamentally incompatible with the exercise of ‘good’ motherhood, or to require compromises and sacrifices that were fundamentally unacceptable. This was reflected in several participants’ comments about the challenges they had seen other working mothers confront within organisations, including: “I had seen what it was like, I know the sacrifices” (Int. 36); “I would look at the executives and what they had to give up ... and I didn’t really want to be there” (Int. 18); and “I knew from having seen [the struggle of other working mothers], it wasn’t a long-term strategy
for me to try and juggle” (Int. 14). Although they framed the transition to self-employment as a positive and deliberate move, one wonders whether these women would have made the same choices had the conditions of organisational employment appeared more accommodating in the first place.

Yet, for these women, self-employment was not simply a rejection of organisational careers and the personal sacrifices they entailed; it was also a positive expression of the women’s principles and professional goals. Sullivan et al. (2007) have identified this motivation as the desire for authenticity, which can be seen in the women’s pursuit of work, or working arrangements, that they perceived to be “ethical” (Int. 13), true to their “values” (Int. 51), or which fit within their “lifestyle” (Int. 28), and provided “satisfaction” (Int. 06), “passion” (Int. 31), and “emotional payback” (Int. 54).

Consistent with findings from the nascent body of literature on maternal self-employment (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013), the opt-in entrepreneurs can be seen to be motivated by a desire for flexibility to work around their children; the freedom and autonomy to pursue meaningful, interesting, and rewarding work; and the desire to escape or avoid the gendered obstacles or annoyances of organisational employment. By opting out of organisational employment and into self-employment, these women sought to “recast the boundaries between their productive and reproductive work” (Ekinsmyth 2011, p.104) to facilitate the pursuit of their career and family goals.

This group echoes the findings by McKie et al. (2013) in their small-scale study of maternal self-employment in Finland and Scotland, specifically, that by opting out of organisational employment and into self-employment, the opt-in entrepreneurs set out to create a new working environment – or ‘careerscape’ – “which recognises the
bedrock of gender relations” but also “allows for the cultivation of more pleasing scenery through which they can traverse the next stage of their career” (2013, p.195).

In this respect, self-employment can be seen as a bounded (Simon 1991) or adaptive response (Leahy & Doughney 2006; Moen & Yu 2000) to an un-renovated (Pocock 2003) environment in which the demands of the marketplace do not align with societal expectations of maternal care, as Ekinsmyth (2013a, 2011) has also noted. Like the ‘satisficers’ identified by Crompton and Harris (1998, p.126), the opt-in entrepreneurs became self-employed in an attempt to balance their professional aspirations against their motherhood goals, without sacrificing too much in either arena. In this way, they are similar to the family-focused entrepreneurs and the career-focused entrepreneurs, attempting to balance the social and economic rewards of paid work with the social and psychological rewards of personal relationships, as identified by Chafetz and Hagan (1996, p.213). However, unlike the ‘satisficers’ identified by Walters (2005) in her study of female part-time and casual workers, the women in this study were unwilling to trade-off intrinsically unsatisfying (part-time) work for the benefits of flexibility and convenience. Rather than ‘making the best of a bad job’ working for someone else, they took matters into their own hands and created their own jobs.

In conclusion, the opt-in entrepreneurs can be seen as both pulled and pushed to self-employment by a combination of career- and family-related motivations, specifically: the prioritisation of motherhood (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Knörr 2011; Hays 1996); a desire for control over their time (Kirkwood 2009; Rouse & Kitching 2006), to facilitate a better work-family balance (Pocock 2003; Moen & Yu 2000); a desire for meaningful and
rewarding work that fit within their personal ethics or values (Sullivan et al. 2007; Mainiero & Sullivan 2006); and the desire to escape or avoid the gendered constraints of organisational employment (McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Hughes 2003; Mallon & Cohen 2001). This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 8.4.

**Figure 8.4 Opt-In Entrepreneurs**

The *opt-in entrepreneurs* (n=16) appear in the centre of the pyramid because their narratives contained elements of both push and pull, and were dominated by a desire for meaningful, rewarding work (thus reflecting the career motive) and the desire to exercise a particular ideal of motherhood (thus reflecting the family motive). Pulled by the lures of autonomy, flexibility, challenge, meaning, and authenticity, pushed by the perceived constraints of organisational employment, the motivations of the *opt-
in entrepreneurs can be seen to reside in the “murky territory between compulsion to change and choice” (Ekinsmyth 2001, p. 109).

8.6 Forced-out entrepreneurs: discussion

The largest group in the sample (n=35), the forced-out entrepreneurs, described self-employment as a transition they made involuntarily, reluctantly, or in reaction to seemingly intractable barriers and constraints beyond their control. These obstacles, combined with the logistical and perceived moral obligations of motherhood, acted to push the women out of organisational employment in the first instance, leaving self-employment as their only viable or attractive option in the labour market. Many of the women highlighted both positive and negative aspects of their experiences, but the thread that united their narratives was one of constraint, a sense of being driven to self-employment reluctantly and reactively – often as an option of last resort – rather than being lured by its intrinsic merits, even if many of the women later came to appreciate those benefits.

Like all of the women in this study, the forced-out entrepreneurs had self-employment narratives that were multifaceted and complex. In general, however, their narratives fell into two broad categories: women who were pressed out of organisational employment by inhospitable workplace cultures (n=25); and women whose transition to self-employment was motivated by family- or career-impediments that limited their ability to participate in organisational employment, such as: a lack of affordable or accessible child care (n=10); living in a geographically remote area (n=9); or experiencing an industry-wide contraction or downturn (n=3). These two categories are discussed in turn.
8.6.1 The ‘motherhood bar’ in organisational employment

It has been argued that being female is no longer as significant a barrier to success in traditional organisational careers, but being a mother – or a caregiver, more generally – is (Budig, Misra & Boeckmann 2012; Folbre 2001; Pocock 2006, 2003; Crittenden 2001). Certainly, many of the forced-out entrepreneurs felt the presence of this ‘motherhood bar’ (Stone 2007) prior to becoming self-employed. These barriers or disappointments were various and numerous, including: difficulty balancing child care responsibilities against the explicit or implicit expectations of firms (n=12); progression constraints and development blockages, such as being passed over for promotions or being assigned less interesting or rewarding projects while employed part-time (n=8); difficulty negotiating or retaining part-time or flexible working arrangements (n=6); the inability to find or afford quality child care to facilitate their engagement in organisational employment (n=10); and being made redundant while pregnant or on maternity leave (n=6) or otherwise involuntarily dismissed (n=3). Many women experienced these factors in combination, severely hampering their ability to remain in organisational employment, both practically and psychologically.

With the exception of the nine women who were made redundant or dismissed, most of the women in this group did not fit the traditional definition of push-factor entrepreneurs (Gilad & Levine 1986; Still & Walker 2006), having resigned from their jobs rather than being forcibly separated. However, thematic analysis of the women’s narratives revealed the extent to which they perceived that their organisational employment situations became difficult, hostile, or untenable arrangements with the onset of motherhood.
Much of the organisational conflict these women described revolved around their desire to work part-time hours, or to fit their paid work around their family obligations, a desire they shared with the *opt-in entrepreneurs*. These results are supported by multiple findings from the Australian Work and Life Index, which has found that working mothers are significantly more likely than other workers to experience negative interference – such as feelings of time pressure – from their paid employment onto their personal lives (Pocock, Skinner & Pisaniello 2010; Pocock, Skinner & Ichii 2009; Pocock, Skinner & Williams 2007; Skinner, Hutchinson & Pocock 2012; Skinner & Pocock 2014, 2008). Accordingly, a majority of women with dependent children in couple households state that they would prefer to work around 25.3 hours per week, while lone mothers with dependent children would prefer to work 31.3 hours per week (Skinner & Pocock 2014), compared to the standard 38-hour work week stipulated by Australia’s National Employment Standards.

Yet when the women in this study attempted to exercise these preferences within organisational employment, they met with reactions ranging from resistance to hostility; being told, for example, that they could only return to their previous jobs in a full-time capacity, or having their commitment to work openly questioned by colleagues and managers. The women in this group saw themselves as dedicated, hard-working employees who were no longer taken seriously or, worse, were actively rejected by their employers once they sought to reduce their working hours. Jade Lloyd-Norton (Int. 57) spoke about the crisis of confidence and feelings of rejection she experienced – the so-called “battered-employee syndrome” she described – fighting for recognition and advancement as a part-time executive in a male-dominated manufacturing company. Linda Timms (Int. 42) felt that her company regarded her maternity leave as a form of
“dead leave” when it came to considering her for promotions or other opportunities for advancement within the company. Verity Templeton (Int. 29) described feeling “angry”, “frustrated”, and “annoyed” when a new manager who “didn’t get this whole being flexible, and engaging employees, and supporting working mothers [thing]” revoked the flexible working arrangement she had negotiated with a former boss.

Consistent with other studies of women’s entrepreneurship outside Australia (Mattis 2004; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Buttner & Moore 1997), many of the women in this group were not entrepreneurs-in-waiting (Mallon & Cohen 2001), motivated by longstanding entrepreneurial aspirations or desires. Rather, the transition was spurred, in part, by their unwillingness to submit to prevailing ‘ideal worker’ (J. C. Williams 2000) norms within organisations, or to the reduced respect they perceived from their employers once they shifted to part-time or flexible working arrangements. Many women saw the conflicts they experienced as emblematic of a wider disconnect between the expectations of organisational culture and their duty of care as mothers, rather than as one-off negative experiences with a single employer. These women made the transition to self-employment because they perceived that no organisation would accept their “position and requirements” (Int. 33) as employees with caregiving responsibilities, and that the frustrations and disappointments they had experienced with their previous employers would simply be repeated with the next.

This resolution can be seen in Jade Lloyd-Norton’s reflection that she “could have quite easily got employment in a part-time capacity somewhere else, but maybe had some of the same hurdles” or Annika Satoh’s resolution that she had “had enough of working for someone else” after being made redundant seven months into her
pregnancy. The sense of resignation shared by many women in this group was best reflected, however, in Skye Mackay’s observation:

    I really don’t believe—I really honestly don’t believe I could go out and get a job given my current situation. I don’t believe any employer would accept my position and my requirements. I really, honestly believe that. – SM/33

Among all of the women in the study, the forced-out entrepreneurs, had the highest frequency of negative responses to the question of whether they would consider returning to organisational employment as an employee (n=14). The need or desire for flexibility was the most commonly cited impediment, with many women perceiving that organisational employment was simply incompatible with their requirements in this regard. This was reflected over and over in responses such as “I need the flexibility to look after my children” (Int. 49), “I need the flexibility of being my own boss so I can be an effective parent” (Int. 60), “I have a disabled child who is 25 and requires full time care, being self-employed gives me flexibility around her needs” (Int. 44), “I need the ability to change days and times when needed because I am the second income earner” (Int. 34); and “Being employed takes away this flexibility and compromises my ability to support my children” (Int. 45).

The ability to ‘be there’ or ‘be available’ for their children was a significant motivator for the forced-out entrepreneurs, as it was for the opt-in entrepreneurs and the family-focused entrepreneurs. This was expressed in various, frequently overlapping ways, including a common desire to be present for their children before and after school or child care (n=16); the importance of being able to attend school events, such as concerts, sporting events, and carnivals, or being able to participate in volunteer opportunities at schools or in mothers’ groups (n=8); the ability to tend to a sick child
without having to explain oneself to an employer or rely on friends and relatives for help (n=5); the desire to avoid the logistical stresses of working outside the home, such as not ‘pushing the children out the door every morning’ (Int. 35)(n=4); and the ability to work around school hours and school holidays (n=4).

These obligations acted not just as logistical barriers to meeting the expectations of organisational employment, but as moral impediments as well. Many women saw caregiving as an *individual* – rather than a collective – responsibility that entailed a significant degree of personal “trade-offs” (Int. 33) and financial “sacrifice” (Int. 05). For some, the transition to self-employment was made, in part, on the resolution that, “If you’re going to have a child, you may as well raise it yourself” (Int. 25), or that, “It’s not up to someone else to raise my children” (Int. 35), or that it was unfair on one’s boss or co-workers to shift “the onus on them to cover your position all the time if you’re having to take time off because your child is ill” (Int. 05). Underpinning many of these statements was a shared (and frequently unquestioned) belief that childrearing is primarily a mother’s responsibility, and that mothers are better suited than anyone to care for their children. In these accounts, caregiving emerges as a responsibility that is explicitly individual and implicitly gendered.

For some, like Gretchen Murphy (Int. 23), this trade-off served as the primary motivator for staying self-employed, even when organisational employment seemed like a more stable, financially attractive option:

Well, you could get a full-time job, but then you've got to be at work at nine o’clock and you've got to put your kid into child care before eight o’clock. And you're paying AUD$25 [for before and after school care] – that’s in the morning and again in the afternoon. And you don’t get there until six. You never get to see your kid and you’re paying money to have them looked after. It doesn’t make sense to me. Well, it’s one of the motivators to staying and persevering with the business.
And look, because I’m an older mum too. I had my son quite late, not through career choice, that’s just the way it happened. I think children are a very precious product in your life, and it’s really important that you rear them properly, and be available to them as much as you can, for as long as they want you to be. God knows they grow up and then they want to have nothing to do with you. – GM/23

Although the logistical obligations and moral dimensions of caregiving clearly acted to push some women out of organisational employment, very few of the married or partnered women in the study expressed frustration at the gendered division of labour in their households, or spoke of trying to renegotiate that division with their spouses or partners (Int. 33, 42, 45, 57, 58). Explaining why she, rather than her spouse, stepped back from her higher-paying marketing career to become the primary caregiver and run a part-time business, Skye Mackay (Int. 33) replied, “I don’t think we really talked about it. I think it’s just probably one of those gender issues [pauses]— hearing it makes me realise that”. Similarly, Susan Buchanan (Int. 45) spoke of her role as primary caregiver as a situation that evolved “implicitly” with her spouse:

Well, you say, ‘There has to be at least one parent around to support [the children] and make sure that they’re okay. That was my take at least. My husband and I just kind of implicitly—we did talk about it sometimes. But we more implicitly went, ‘Yes, someone’s taking this [responsibility for the children] and making it happen’.

Of all the participants, only Grace Jensen (Int. 58), the information technology consultant who resigned from her corporate job because she could not find suitable child care, reflected on the gendered distribution of labour in her household:

It frustrates me a little that it’s on me to manage it all, and to pick up the slack. My husband is very good, and he helps out a lot, but there was never any question that his career would suffer for it. And I guess it makes sense that if someone’s career is going to suffer, it should be one of us, not both of us. Because, you know, we need an income. But it does feel frustrating. – GJ/58
For the women in this group, self-employment was not a proactive and deliberate expression of a longstanding entrepreneurial desire, it was a reaction to – or a revolt against (Sullivan et al. 2007) – organisational cultures that asked them to choose between their devotions to work, on the one hand, and their devotion to family, on the other (Blair-Loy 2003). Confronted with organisational cultures that seemed unwilling or unable to bend to either their logistical or (perceived) moral caregiving obligations, these women saw self-employment as their only viable employment alternative. To the extent that these women saw their options on the labour market as severely restricted by their logistical and moral obligations as caregivers, they can be seen as necessity entrepreneurs, driven by a lack of real or perceived alternatives in the labour market (Amoros & Bosma 2013; Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros 2011; Kelley et al. 2013; Reynolds et al. 2002).

Unlike the opt-in entrepreneurs, who had opted out of organisational employment willingly and voluntarily, the forced-out entrepreneurs described their transition in terms of reluctance, or resignation. For these women, self-employment allowed them to reconstruct their paid work around their caregiving responsibilities and offered some measure of relief from whatever had frustrated or constrained them within organisations (Mallon & Cohen 2001). In this respect, the transition to self-employment allowed them to ‘do business’ differently, if not necessarily to ‘do gender’ differently (Ekinsmyth 2013a, p.541).

8.6.2 Structural and economic barriers

In addition to cultural barriers within organisations, many forced-out entrepreneurs faced significant structural and economic barriers that hampered their ability to participate in organisational employment. The inability to access or afford
suitable child care (including long day care and before- and after-school care) was the most significant barrier, affecting 10 women in the sample. This barrier was particularly acute for women with more than two children, lone mothers, or women with severely disabled children. Only a small number of women cited a lack of child care (n=3) as their sole motivator, however. Usually, problems securing child care were cited in conjunction with organisational conflicts – such as the cultural expectation of long hours, or inflexible work schedules – that rendered organisational employment unworkable or untenable. Child care responsibilities have been found to be a motivator to entrepreneurship for women in the United States (Mattis 2004), but not in Australia (Bennett & Dann 2000; Dann & Bennett 2005). This is not to say that the accessibility and affordability of child care was not a motivator at all; simply that, for most women, child care was one of many factors influencing the women’s transition to self-employment.

Living in a remote geographical area was the most common economic barrier that limited the women’s options in the workforce (n=9), particularly once the arrival of children presented new logistical hurdles in managing the spatial and temporal demands of working outside the home. The women in this group spoke about the lack of opportunities for tele-commuting, or poor Internet connectivity in rural areas; as well as the difficulties of managing long commutes to distant workplaces, schools and/or child care centres, while meeting the expected working hours of their employers. For the more highly-educated or highly-trained women in this group, there was also the problem of finding work that matched their professional skills and qualifications in remote and regional areas. Self-employment emerged for these women as the only viable employment choice. In this respect, they can also be seen as necessity.
entrepreneurs, driven by a lack of alternatives in the labour market (Amoros & Bosma 2013; Bosma, Wennekers & Amoros 2011; Kelley et al. 2013; Reynolds et al. 2002).

Women in outer suburban areas spoke about the practical, logistical hassles of managing their work and family responsibilities. For them, the stresses of balancing organisational expectations against lengthy commute times and rigid school or child care schedules acted as a strong push-factor. For the suburban dwellers, staying in organisational employment was a possibility, but one that came a significant cost, both to themselves and their families. This was reflected in comments such as: “The practicality of it still made it difficult” (Int. 50), or, “I didn’t want to put the stress on the kids trying to be there [at work]” (Int. 34).

Women living in outer regional or remote areas, on the other hand, tended to see self-employment as literally their only option in the labour market, reflected in comments such as: “There were just so few other opportunities” (Int. 24), or, “In a small town, what else can I do?” (Int. 27), or, “There’s not much call for academics down this way” (Int. 27), and, “The employment potential here is pretty negligible” (Int. 59). From a push-pull perspective, self-employment for women in regional or remote areas can be seen as a necessity-driven, constrained choice, shaped by the lack of economic opportunities in the ‘meso/macro context’ of rural Australia (Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007). But among the forced-out entrepreneurs, rural women were the most likely to describe their transition to self-employment in terms of traditional pull factors, such as personal fulfilment, independence, challenge, and achievement. The extent to which their businesses were born of constraint was offset by the fact that living remotely was, for the most part, a conscious lifestyle decision for these women and their families. These results support earlier findings that resilience
and resourcefulness are driving motivators for female entrepreneurs in rural Australia (Newton et al 2003), which reside in the intersection between push and pull. The particular circumstances of women living in regional and remote communities in Australia suggest that this group may be worthy of separate consideration in future studies.

8.6.3 Conclusion

Among the forced-out entrepreneurs, only a relatively small number experienced traditional career-related push factors such as job loss due to involuntary redundancy, (Gilad & Levine 1986; Cooper & Dunkelberg 1986) or economic factors (Gilad & Levine 1986; Cooper & Dunkelberg 1986). The majority of women in this group perceived themselves as pushed out of organisational employment by family-related constraints or work-to-family conflicts that arose when the women sought to reduce their working hours, or work flexibly around their family commitments. The family-related constraints included: job loss due to involuntary redundancy during pregnancy or maternity leave; child care requirements (Mattis 2004); lone motherhood; and the presence of a disabled family member (Baxter 2013a). The career-family conflicts encompassed: poor organisational cultures (Hughes 2005) including barriers to career advancement or progression, particularly in part-time work (Buttner & Moore 1997); inflexible working arrangements (McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Hughes 2005; Mattis 2004); and poor quality part-time jobs (Knörr 2011; Mattis 2004). These push factors are illustrated in Figure 8.5.
Figure 8.5 Forced-out entrepreneurs

The forced-out entrepreneurs (n=35) are shown at the base of the pyramid because, in addition to being mainly pushed into self-employment, they were the largest group in the study and had self-employment narratives that were mostly dominated by career- and family-focused motivations. The qualitative methodology employed in this study limits the generalisability of these findings to the general population. Further quantitative research would be useful to test the distribution of the four motivational profiles in the wider population of self-employed mothers.

8.7 Conclusion

The aim of this study has been to explain why some women make the transition to self-employment after the onset of motherhood, applying a theoretically-informed
thematic analysis to the career narratives of 60 women who became self-employed after falling pregnant or having a child come into their care. This study has sought to answer the call for a more in-depth, nuanced examination of entrepreneurial motivation (Dawson & Henley 2012; Hughes 2006, 2003) that acknowledges the influence of family and social structures on the entrepreneurial process (de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007; Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; Aldrich & Cliff 2003; Rouse & Kitching 2006; Rouse, Treanor & Fleck 2013).

This study employed a novel approach, overlaying the dominant explanations of women’s labour market behaviours from the sociological literature on women, work, and family on the predominant push-pull theory of entrepreneurial motivation. In so doing, this study expands the body of literature on women’s labour market behaviours to include self-employment, which has been frequently overlooked in the sociological literature. In so doing, this study has examined the role of choice maximisation (Hakim 2006, 2002, 2000), ‘satisficing’ behaviour (Brown 2004; Corby & Stanworth 2009; Simon 1956; Walters 2005), and constraint (Corby & Stanworth 2009; Crompton & Harris 1998; McRae 2003) on the transition to self-employment.

With respect to the literature on entrepreneurial motivation, this study also makes a significant contribution by moving the analysis of women’s self-employment beyond the customary focus on money, markets, and management – the three Ms mentioned by Brush et al. (2009) – to include the influence of ‘motherhood’, the ‘meso/macro’ environment (Brush, de Bruin & Welter 2009; de Bruin, Brush & Welter 2007). Traditionally, entrepreneurship studies have treated ‘family’ and ‘business’ as wholly separate activities, one without bearing on the other. This study, in contrast, examines the process of venture creation from within the individual’s household or
family context, and creates a new conceptual model for understanding how career-based motives (e.g. money, markets, and management) and family-based motives (e.g. motherhood) intersect.

Drawing together these two disparate fields of literature, this study finds that only a minority of women in the sample were lured to self-employment voluntarily by their desire to maximise their goals for career or family. Conversely, only a minority of women were driven to self-employment by constraints that were exclusively related to career or family. Rather, for the majority of women in this study, self-employment can be understood as a ‘satisficing’ behaviour; an attempt to balance their goals for career and family, in an overall environment of constraint. This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 8.6.

**Figure 8.6** Choice, constraint, and satisficing in the push-pull model
As described in Section 8.2, the horizontal, career-family axis represents the extent to which the women in the sample were motivated primarily by their pursuit of career-related goals, at one end; or family-related goals, on the other. Similarly, the vertical push-pull axis of the model illustrates the extent to which the women in the study were pulled to self-employment willingly and purposefully, lured by the intrinsic benefits of entrepreneurship; or were pushed into self-employment by seemingly intractable barriers. In terms of the sociological literature, the vertical axis shows the extent to which the transition to self-employment after motherhood was a deliberate and conscious choice, at one extreme; or a reactive, reluctant, and constrained response, at the other.

Only a minority of family-focused and career-focused entrepreneurs described self-employment as a choice they made willingly and deliberately in pursuit of their aspirations for career or family. Thus, these two groups are represented on either side of the vertical axis, separating career-focused motivations (on the left) from family-focused motivations (on the right). Yet, although the family-focused entrepreneurs were primarily motivated by family or household concerns, career considerations were nonetheless evident in their narratives. Conversely, although the career-focused entrepreneurs were motivated primarily by professional goals, family or household considerations were nonetheless evident in their narratives. The women’s motivations resided along a ‘maximisation spectrum’, as illustrated by the colour gradient, with very few women in either category emerging as ‘pure’ maximisers on the career-family axis.

At the other extreme of the push-pull spectrum, the largest group in this study – the forced-out entrepreneurs – described self-employment as a reluctant or reactive response to seemingly intractable constraints or circumstances. On the career-family
spectrum, very few of the forced-out entrepreneurs ascribed their self-employment to constraints that were exclusively career-related or exclusively family-related. For most, the constraints emerged at the intersection of – or clash between – career and family.

This was also the case for the opt-in entrepreneurs, whose placement along the career-family spectrum reflects their desire for meaningful, rewarding work (thus reflecting the career motive) and the desire to exercise a particular ideal of motherhood (thus reflecting the family motive). The placement of the opt-in entrepreneurs along the vertical axis reflects the fact that although the majority of the women in this group perceived the transition to self-employment as a positive and deliberate choice, their narratives also contained multiple elements of constraint.

Despite the differing degrees of willingness expressed in the transition, for most women in the study, self-employment can be understood as ‘satisficing’ behaviour, an attempt to strike a balance between ‘good’ worker ideals, on the one hand, and ‘good’ mother ideals, on the other. This study adds a new dimension to the work of Chaftez and Hagan (1996), Crompton and Harris (1998), and Corby and Stanworth (2009), who argue that ‘satisficing’ offers a better conceptual model for understanding women’s behaviour in the labour market than the notion that these behaviours are the result of pure choice or pure constraint. Whereas those studies focused on women in organisational settings, this study focuses on women who engage in self-employment.

Regardless of whether the transition was a deliberate and proactive strategy, or a reluctant and reactive response, the majority of women in this study undertook the transition to self-employment in pursuit of success in their professional and domestic spheres, without attempting to maximise one over the other. In this respect, the women in this study were attempting to satisfice the two socially-valued goal sets advanced by
Chafetz and Hagan: the social and economic rewards of paid work, and the social and psychological rewards of personal relationships (1996, p.213). For most of the women in this study, however, this transition was made in an environment of *constraint*, rather than *choice*. 
Chapter Nine:

Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This thesis aimed to understand the factors that motivate women to become self-employed after motherhood. Maternal self-employment is a relatively under-researched phenomenon, both internationally and in Australia. However, applying the insights from the sociological literature on women, work, and family, and the literature on women’s entrepreneurship, a theoretically-informed thematic approach (Braun & Clarke 2006) was used to analyse the career narratives of 60 women who became self-employed after motherhood. This approach was used to create a rich, nuanced answer to the study’s central research question:

*What motivates some women to become self-employed after motherhood?*

To answer this question, this study drew upon and integrated the sociological literature surrounding women, work, and family, and the extant research on entrepreneurial motivation, specifically push-pull theory, and to answer the following two sub-questions:

i. In terms of the dominant explanations offered by the sociological literature on women, work, and family are women who make the transition to self-employment after motherhood motivated by work or family concerns, or both? Is the transition a function of choice, or constraint?
ii. In terms of the dominant explanations offered by the entrepreneurial literature, are women who become self-employed after motherhood *pulled to* self-employment by the intrinsic benefits of entrepreneurship, or are they *pushed* into self-employment by gendered barriers or structural constraints?

9.2 The significance and contribution of this research

This study is significant in its finding that, although many women *use* self-employment to accommodate their work and family responsibilities, their motivations for *becoming* self-employed after motherhood are not homogeneous, and do not fit a single, family-focused narrative. This study found considerable variation in the extent to which the women in the sample framed their transition as a deliberate and proactive choice, in fulfilment of certain career- or family-related objectives, or a reluctant and reactive response to seemingly intractable circumstances or constraints of conventional organisational employment. For a majority of women in the study, however, the decision to become self-employed after motherhood was grounded in a complex interplay between their preferences for career *and* family, made in a context of *constraint*, rather than *choice*.

Four groups were identified: *family-focused entrepreneurs* (n=5), were pulled into self-employment by their desire to provide exclusive, home-based maternal care for their young children, while supplementing the household income; *career-focused entrepreneurs* (n=4), who chose self-employment purposefully and deliberately, motivated by a desire for professional autonomy, career advancement, financial gain, or status; *opt-in entrepreneurs* (n=16), who chose self-employment voluntarily, motivated
mainly by a desire to create meaningful, rewarding work that did not impinge on family life; and *forced-out entrepreneurs* (n=35), who felt pressed or pushed into entrepreneurship by gendered barriers within organisations or other structural constraints, and saw self-employment as their only viable employment option in the labour market.

Nearly every woman in this study ended up configuring her business around her children, either working part-time from home (n=36) or flexibly full-time, either from home or a dedicated premises (n=24). The need for flexibility was a core theme that appeared in all four narrative groups, albeit in different ways. With very few exceptions, the women in this study were united in their desire to work part-time hours, or to fit full-time working hours around their children’s daily schedules. Institutional factors such as school operating hours, holiday schedules, extracurricular activities, and the availability of after-school or extended child care services were core issues necessitating greater flexibility for these women, almost all of whom were the primary caregivers in their households.

Flexibility carried a moral dimension for many women, as well as being a practical necessity. Women across all four motivational groups spoke passionately about the importance of ‘being there’ or ‘being available’ and ‘present’ for their children – before and after school (n=25), at school events (n=13), when a child was sick or unwell (n=6), or in the quiet times between activities (n=5). The women expressed these activities as key elements in the work of motherhood, vital to the well-being of both mother and child. The concepts of maternal ‘availability’ and ‘accessibility’ have been shown to be essential elements in the conceptualisation of ‘good’ motherhood.
(Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson 2001; Hattery 2001; Hays 1996; Johnston & Swanson 2006), a finding which is echoed here.

The women in this study approached this concept of ‘good’ motherhood in different ways, but the importance of maternal ‘availability’ and ‘accessibility’ to the well-being of both mother and child was present in nearly all of the women’s narratives. Among the family-focused entrepreneurs, the flexibility to work from home, around their children’s needs, was an integral part of fulfilling their desire for exclusive maternal care. For the career-focused entrepreneurs, on the other hand, self-employment allowed the flexibility and autonomy to be available and accessible to their children in a way they had felt unable to as salaried employees, without sacrificing their professional ambitions. For many of the opt-in and forced-out entrepreneurs, the inability to work flexibly, or to progress within a flexible working arrangement, were primary factors that rendered organisational employment undesirable or unworkable. Across all four motivational groups, the need for flexibility to manage the moral and practical demands of caregiving was the most commonly cited impediment in considering whether to return to organisational employment in the future (n=24), even though some women saw salaried employment as the more financially stable or less stressful option (n=9).

This study supports earlier findings that use of push-pull theory in quantitative, survey-based studies compresses and oversimplifies the entrepreneurial process, particularly when examined through the lens of caregiving, or gender (Carter & Cannon 1992, pp.21–24; Buttner & Moore 1997; Hughes 2003, 2006). It finds that self-employed mothers perceive flexibility and autonomy as necessary workplace attributes – not optional extras. Most large-scale quantitative studies of entrepreneurial motivation have traditionally classified flexibility and autonomy as pull factors (for a discussion of
this phenomenon, see Dawson & Henley 2012). But rather than being lured or \textit{pulled} to self-employment by the benefits of flexibility and autonomy, a majority of women in this study saw the \textit{lack} of flexibility and autonomy within organisations as the primary factor that \textit{pushed} them out.

This study provides empirical support for the findings of Ekinsmyth (2011, 2013a, 2013b), Duberley and Carrigan (2013; see also, Carrigan & Duberley 2013), and others (McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Kelley et al. 2010; Evans & Kelley 2002) that many women perceive the work of motherhood to be at least as important, if not \textit{more so}, than their paid work. The prioritisation of motherhood (Ekinsmyth 2013a, p.541) and the desire for high levels of maternal involvement in the raising of children (Hays 1996; Hattery 2001; Liss et al. 2013) were core themes that appeared again and again through the study, and played an important part in the transition to self-employment for most women.

In their desire to work around their children, many women in this study appear, at first glance, to embody Hakim’s (2000, 2002, 2006) description of the \textit{adaptive} woman, enacting their preference for a more balanced, family-focused life over a traditional ‘career’, characterised by a series of linear moves within one or two organisations within a single industry (Sullivan et al. 2007). But rather than trading-off intrinsically satisfying work for the extrinsic benefits of convenience, as some part-time employees have been found to do (Walters 2005), or accepting the common wisdom that autonomous, challenging jobs are inherently incapable of accommodating flexibility, as other part-time workers have been found to do (Corby & Stanworth 2009), a large number of women in this study were spurred to self-employment by a desire to participate in work that was autonomous, challenging, rewarding, \textit{and} flexible. Thus, in
contrast to Hakim’s assertion that *adaptive* women have a lower subjective attachment to work than *career-focused* women (or men, in general), this research finds that career ambition and subjective attachment to work remained strong, even among self-employed women with explicitly family-focused motivations.

The perception that organisational employment could not deliver work that was both flexible *and* rewarding was a frequently cited motivator among both the *opt-in* and *forced-out* entrepreneurs. Their unwillingness to settle for the lower-quality, lower-status part-time jobs that seemed to be available to them in organisational employment – to ‘make the best’ of bad part-time jobs (Walters 2005) – was a major impetus in the move to self-employment, regardless of whether the transition was conceived as a proactive strategy, in the case of the *opt-in* entrepreneurs, or as a reactive response, as with the *forced-out* entrepreneurs. Indeed, for many, the sacrifices entailed in spending time away from their children, plus the “second shift” (Hochschild 1989) burdens of engaging in paid work, made the *quality* and potential fulfilment of their work matter *more*, not less. In Jocelyn Beaton’s (Int. 15) words:

> It is a big sacrifice to not be with your kids in many ways, so you want to be doing quality work. The time that you sacrifice—because it’s not all smooth sailing, so those times when you’re on a deadline but you still have to do all the other stuff, you have to get up at 5:00am and work until midnight because your day is interrupted with commitments with the kids. It’s pretty tough, so you have to really be doing high quality work.

> Life is too short. If you’re giving up the time with the kids *and* you’re making yourself so busy – because you *are* really busy trying to do everything, running the house – you kind of need to be doing something you really like, and you feel is really useful. I think it makes the value of the work, or the quality of the work, matter *more*. – JB/15

Consistent with other studies of women’s entrepreneurship in Europe and the United States (Mattis 2004; Mallon & Cohen 2001; Buttner & Moore 1997), this study
finds that most women who transition to self-employment after motherhood are generally not spurred by longstanding entrepreneurial desires. For many women, the transition to self-employment after motherhood can be understood as a rejection or revolt against the prevailing (masculine) norms within organisations. In other words, this study reinforces findings on female entrepreneurship, generally (Hughes 2006, 2003; Mattis 2004; Moore & Buttner 1997; Buttner & Moore 1997; Cromie & Hayes 1988), and maternal self-employment specifically (McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Mallon & Cohen 2001) that many women who become self-employed after motherhood do so, in part, on resolving that organisational employment is profoundly incompatible with the practical and moral obligations of care.

Nevertheless, with few exceptions, the women in all four motivational groups demonstrated a strong subjective attachment to paid work, contrary to Hakim’s assertion that women who choose to work flexibly around their family responsibilities have a lesser and ‘qualitatively’ different commitment (1995, p.434) to work than women who remain in full-time employment. Rather, the majority of the women in the study generally regarded organisational employment as failing to meet their desire for work that was both interesting and flexible. The onset of motherhood made these women less attached to their employers, but not necessarily to their career aspirations or to their work. Whether the transition was undertaken consciously and deliberately (as in the family-focused, career-focused, and opt-in entrepreneurs), or reactively and reluctantly (as in the forced-out entrepreneurs), self-employment provided many women with the opportunity to stay connected to paid work, or pursue their ambitions, while maintaining the flexibility they perceived were necessary to meet their children’s needs, or be ‘good’ mothers.
The findings in this study raise a paradox. Many women undertook the transition to self-employment, either proactively or reactively, in order to enhance their connection to paid work or pursue opportunities they perceived were closed to them in organisational employment. Once self-employed, however, the women increased their engagement with ‘mothering’ responsibilities – actively structuring their paid work around their caregiving responsibilities. This is consistent with recent Australian studies on time use in self-employment, which have found that self-employed mothers spend less time engaged in paid work, and significantly more time on housework and child care than mothers who are employees or self-employed fathers (Craig & Powell 2010; Baxter et al. 2007). The fact that many women in this study did not deliberately enter self-employment as a conscious strategy to maximise the time they spent with their children suggests that self-employment, or working from home, increases women’s attachments to their motherhood roles by providing more favourable conditions for women to assume a greater share of their socially-ordained caregiving role, as has been argued by Osnowitz (2005). Thus, self-employment among mothers appears to reinforce traditional gender distributions within couple households, rather than leading to a redistribution of paid and unpaid work among men and women (Craig & Powell 2010). The aim of this study was to focus specifically on the motivations of self-employed mothers, a group that has not received substantial research attention in Australia, and therefore did not examine on the effects of fathers or partners in the self-employment decision. How couple households negotiate these arrangements is also a question worthy of future research.
9.3 Research limitations and future research

Every research study has its limitations, and this thesis is no exception. This study was based on in-depth, qualitative interviews with a non-probabilistic, self-selected sample of self-employed mothers in Australia. The sample size (n=60), however, is considered large for a narrative study (Bailey 1996). Although smaller, homogeneous sample sizes are associated with defining ‘essences’ in narrative research, larger, more heterogeneous samples have been found to be more useful for developing theory (Sandelowski 1995). Nevertheless, this study was not designed to be generalisable to the population of self-employed mothers, nor to female entrepreneurs at large. However, rich descriptions of unique personal experiences can nonetheless touch on the universality of human experience by highlighting the shared themes and understandings among individuals with a common experience, laying the conceptual framework on which to build more concrete empirical analyses (Smith, Flowers & Larkin 2009). Indeed, the entrepreneurial profiles suggested by this study would benefit from empirical testing in the general population of self-employed mothers.

Retrospective recall is another potential limitation to this study, which is shared by many other interview-based research methods (see, for example, Kirkwood 2009; Kirkwood & Tootell 2008; Mallon & Cohen 2001). It is important to restate that, as a methodology, narrative analysis accepts that individuals reconstruct reality when they recall and recount their experiences of the past. As such, narrative researchers are generally less interested in the historical or objective ‘truth’ of individual accounts than with understanding how individuals understand, or rationalise, their experiences retrospectively (Chase 2005; Connelly & Clandinin 1990; Polkinghorne 1988, 1995; Riessman 2008, 2005, 1993). The topics discussed in the interview were generally very
salient to the participants, none of whom had problems remembering the reasons or circumstances which led them to make the transition to self-employment. Often, these recollections were very fresh in the participants’ minds and they were generally very eager to convey their experiences. The semi-structured, conversational style of the interviews also allowed for the opportunity to note any inconsistencies in the narratives, and prompt the participants for clarification. This style of interview also provided flexibility for the researcher to probe for deeper levels of meaning, potentially mitigating subjects’ tendency to provide socially-acceptable or desirable responses.

While this thesis focused on motivations for business start-up, many researchers have noted that entrepreneurial motivations change over different stages in the entrepreneurial process (Shane, Locke & Collins 2003; Carter et al. 2003; Carter & Cannon 1992). Although the potential for motivations to change is noted in the findings, this research does not capture those changes over time. In this regard, this study adds to a growing body of research suggesting the need for longitudinal research in this area (Mallon & Cohen 2001; Bouckenooghe et al. 2007; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013; Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Patterson & Mavin 2009; Mattis 2004).

Similarly, with respect to the findings on the women’s willingness to return to organisational employment, the findings are based on the participants’ responses to a hypothetical future situation. Although the findings provide useful insight into the participants’ present feelings about potential future employment, they cannot tell us much about the women’s actual movements from self-employment to organisational employment, or vice versa. It has been suggested that mothers who become self-employed are less likely than other working mothers to return to organisational
employment, either full-time or part-time (Baxter 2013a), but the actual incidence and experience of this transition is little understood. Whether and in what capacity women make the transition back to organisational employment and the long-term effects of maternal self-employment on earnings and retirement savings are also subjects worthy of further exploration.

9.4 Conclusion

This study applied a theoretically-informed thematic analysis to the career narratives of 60 participants in order to examine the factors that motivate women to become self-employed after motherhood. Applying the insights provided by the sociological literature around women, work, and family, and the literature on entrepreneurial motivation, specifically push-pull theory, this study has argued that self-employed mothers fall into four motivational categories based on the extent to which they regard the transition to self-employment as a proactive strategy or a reactive response, grounded in their preferences for career or family, or both. The four categories proposed by this research are: family-focused entrepreneurs (n=5), who are pulled into self-employment by their desire to provide exclusive, home-based maternal care for their young children, while supplementing the household income; career-focused entrepreneurs (n=4), who choose self-employment purposefully and deliberately, motivated by a desire for professional autonomy, career advancement, financial gain, or status; opt-in entrepreneurs (n=16), who choose self-employment voluntarily, motivated mainly by a desire to create meaningful, rewarding work that did not impinge on family life; and forced-out entrepreneurs (n=35), who perceive that they are pressed or pushed into entrepreneurship by gendered barriers within organisations.
or other structural constraints, and saw self-employment as their only viable employment option in the labour market.

Previous studies examining the experiences and time-use patterns of self-employed mothers have suggested that women adopt this working arrangement as an intentional and deliberate strategy to balance their work and family commitments, or to bring the separate domains of ‘work’ and ‘family’ into a single sphere (Ekinsmyth 2011, 2013a, 2013b; Duberley & Carrigan 2013; Carrigan & Duberley 2013; Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013; Craig & Powell 2010; McKie, Biese & Jyrkinen 2013; Rouse & Kitching 2006). This research has elaborated on these previous studies by examining women’s motivations for becoming self-employed, as opposed to seeking out other forms of employment. This study finds that although family considerations played a key role in how the women *constructed* their business activities once they were self-employed, their initial motivations for *becoming* self-employed were heterogeneous, and did not fit a narrow, family-driven narrative. While the family dimension was important to every woman in the study, the need or desire to accommodate family responsibilities *alone* did not explain the transition. For many women in this study, self-employment was not merely a stopgap or ‘convenience’ solution to a period in their life-course when the ability to sustain organisational employment was difficult due to the temporal constraints of family life, as has been suggested by some (Jayawarna, Rouse & Kitching 2013; Rouse & Kitching 2006). Rather, many women saw self-employment as the *only* way to advance or continue careers that had been curtailed by rigid or inflexible organisational environments. In this regard, motherhood was a trigger, but it was not the *motivator*. Although nearly every woman in the study ended up using self-employment to accommodate the daily needs and rhythms of her children, there was
considerable variation in the extent to which the participants saw self-employment as a deliberate or proactive choice. For many mothers, the decision to become self-employed can be understood as a complex function of their preferences for career and family, a satisficing decision made in a context of constraint, rather than choice.
Appendix 1.1: Participant Information Statement

Exploring the Lived Experiences of Self-Employed Working Mothers in Australia

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

(1) What is the study about?

You are invited to participate in a study of working women who have chosen to start their own businesses after becoming mothers. This research will focus on understanding the motivations and daily experiences of self-employed working mothers in Australia.

Juggling work and family is a major preoccupation for many women, especially those with children. The majority of academic research on working mothers in Australia has tended to focus on women's employment in the context of companies or organisations. Much less is known about the experiences of women who opt to work for themselves after having children. This study aims to contribute understanding about this little-researched segment of the population by examining the motivations and experiences of self-employed working mothers. It uses in-depth, open-ended interviews to explore the ways in which self-employed working mothers manage their work and family commitments and engage with the broader business community.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Meraiah Foley and will form the basis for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Professor Marian Baird and Dr. Rae Cooper.

(3) What does the study involve?

Participation in the study involves the completion of a brief questionnaire followed by participation in a detailed interview of between one and two hours. The interviews would take place at a location of your choosing and would be audio-recorded and transcribed with permission. All information disclosed in the demographic questionnaire and subsequent interview will be kept strictly confidential, and all personal identifiers will be permanently removed from the final dissertation and any papers resulting from the study. As such, there are no risks to participating in this study.
(4) **How much time will the study take?**

The short questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete, and can be completed either before or at the time of the interview. The detailed interview will take between one and two hours.

(5) **Can I withdraw from the study?**

Being in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to consent and, if you do consent, you can withdraw at any time up to the publication of results without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue. The audio-recording will be erased, the questionnaire will be destroyed and the information provided will not be included in the study.

(6) **Will anyone else know the results?**

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) **Will the study benefit me?**

We cannot and do no guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

(8) **Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes. If you think you know of anyone that may be interested, please get them to contact us directly.

(9) **What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?**

When you have read this information, Meraiah Foley will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact either Professor Marian Baird or Meraiah Foley on (02) 9351 6439 or at marian.baird@sydney.edu.au or mfol8216@uni.sydney.edu.au.

(10) **What if I have a complaint or any concerns?**

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep.
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, .......................................................... [PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Self-Employed Working Mothers in Australia

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

(1) The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

(2) I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

(3) I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

(4) I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that any research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

(5) I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time up to the publication of results, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.
(6) I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided in the demographic questionnaire will not be included in the study.

(7) I consent to:

Audio-recording

YES ☐ NO ☐

Receiving Feedback

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback” question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Email: __________________________________________________________

............................................................
Signature

............................................................

Please PRINT name

............................................................
Date
Appendix 2.1 Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire

A. Introduction

Thank you for your interest in our study.

Before completing the survey, all participants must read the Participation Information Statement, which is available for download at our website: www.mothersincompany.com

This questionnaire will determine whether you are eligible to participate and run you through a series of questions about you, your household and your business. We estimate this questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Please note that this survey contains a number of open-ended questions, and is best accessed via a laptop or desktop computer, rather than a mobile device.

Please be assured that all aspects of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants and their businesses will not be identifiable in such a report.

*1. Are you male or female?
   - Male
   - Female

*2. Are you self-employed or running your own business?
   - Yes
   - No

*3. Do you have dependent children?
   - Yes
   - No

*4. Did you start your business or become self-employed after becoming pregnant, having children, or having a child come into your care?
   - Yes
   - No
Demographic Questionnaire

5. Is your business based in Australia?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

B. Personal & Household Information

6. What is your age?
- [ ] 15-19
- [ ] 20-24
- [ ] 25-34
- [ ] 35-44
- [ ] 45-54
- [ ] 55-69
- [ ] 60+

Education

7. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- [ ] Year 9 or below
- [ ] Year 10 or equivalent
- [ ] Year 11 or equivalent
- [ ] Year 12 or equivalent
- [ ] Certificate
- [ ] Diploma or Advanced Diploma
- [ ] Bachelor’s Degree
- [ ] Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma
- [ ] Postgraduate Degree
## Demographic Questionnaire

### 8. What was your main field of study?

- [ ] Natural and Physical Sciences
- [ ] Information Technology
- [ ] Engineering and Related Technologies
- [ ] Architecture and Building
- [ ] Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies
- [ ] Health
- [ ] Education
- [ ] Management and Commerce
- [ ] Society and Culture
- [ ] Creative Arts
- [ ] Food, Hospitality and Personal Services
- [ ] Mixed Field Programmes (i.e. multiple fields of study or generalist courses)
- [ ] Other

## Personal Income

### 9. Approximately what is your individual weekly income from all sources, before tax (including pensions and allowances)?

- [ ] Nil or negative income
- [ ] $1 - $149
- [ ] $150 - $249
- [ ] $250 - $399
- [ ] $400 - $599
- [ ] $600 - $799
- [ ] $800 - $999
- [ ] $1000 - $1299
- [ ] $1300 - $1599
- [ ] $1600 - $1999
- [ ] $2000 or more
- [ ] Not sure

## Relationship in household
## Demographic Questionnaire

10. Which of the following best describes your domestic situation?
- [ ] I am married, or living with a partner
- [ ] I am a single parent, with sole or joint custody
- [ ] Other (please specify)

## Household Income (single)

11. Who is the highest income earner in your household?
- [ ] I am
- [ ] Other (please specify)

## Household Income

12. Who is the highest income earner in your household?
- [ ] I am
- [ ] My partner/spouse
- [ ] My partner/spouse and I earn about the same
- [ ] Not sure
- [ ] Other (please specify)

## Residence

13. In which state or territory do you live?
- [ ] Australian Capital Territory
- [ ] New South Wales
- [ ] Northern Territory
- [ ] Queensland
- [ ] South Australia
- [ ] Tasmania
- [ ] Victoria
- [ ] Western Australia

14. What is your postcode?
### Demographic Questionnaire

#### Children

15. How many dependent children do you have? (Includes grandchildren, foster children or any child for whom you, either alone or jointly with another person, are legally responsible for the day-to-day care.)

- [ ] 1
- [ ] 2
- [ ] 3
- [ ] 4
- [ ] 5+

#### Indigenous Background

16. Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

#### Nationality and Background

17. Which of the following best describes you:

- [ ] Australian citizen
- [ ] Permanent resident
- [ ] Temporary resident
- [ ] Other

#### Country of Birth

18. Were you born in Australia?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

#### Country of Birth (continued)

19. In which country were you born?

[ ]

#### C. Business Information
Demographic Questionnaire

20. How many businesses do you currently own or operate?

☐ 1
☐ 2
☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5+

Industry

21. How would you describe your industry? If you own or operate more than one business, please tell us about your primary business.

☐ Agriculture, Fishing and Forestry
☐ Mining
☐ Manufacturing
☐ Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services
☐ Construction
☐ Wholesale Trade
☐ Retail Trade
☐ Accommodation and Food Services
☐ Transport, Postal and Warehousing
☐ Information, Media and Telecommunications
☐ Financial and Insurance Services
☐ Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services
☐ Professional, Scientific and Technical Services
☐ Administrative and Support Services
☐ Public Administration and Safety
☐ Education and Training
☐ Health Care and Social Assistance
☐ Art and Recreation Services
☐ Personal Services
☐ Other (please specify)
### Demographic Questionnaire

**22. How long have you been self-employed or running your business?**

- [ ] Less than 6 months
- [ ] Less than 12 months
- [ ] 1 year or less than 5 years
- [ ] 5 years to less than 10 years
- [ ] 10 years to less than 15 years
- [ ] 15 years or more

### Hours worked in business

**23. Approximately how many hours do you usually work in your business each week?**

- [ ] 1 - 14
- [ ] 15 - 19
- [ ] 20 - 24
- [ ] 25 - 29
- [ ] 30 - 34
- [ ] 35 - 39
- [ ] 40 - 44
- [ ] 45 - 49
- [ ] 50+

### Location of work

**24. Where do you conduct most of your business activities?**

- [ ] At home
- [ ] At a client's home (or homes)
- [ ] At a client's workplace (or workplaces)
- [ ] At a dedicated premises outside the home (office, retail shop, warehouse, etc.)
- [ ] At my employer's premises (i.e. when I am working in a paid job other than my business)
- [ ] While travelling

- [ ] Other (please specify) [ ]

### Business Structure
### Demographic Questionnaire

25. Which of the following best characterises the structure of your business?

- [ ] Sole-trader
- [ ] Partnership
- [ ] Proprietary Limited Company
- [ ] Trust
- [ ] Not sure

### Employees & Contractors

26. How many paid employees or contractors currently work in your business? If you are a sole-trader or in a partnership, please exclude yourself and your partner.

- [ ] I have no employees or contractors
- [ ] 1 - 4
- [ ] 5 - 14
- [ ] 15 - 19
- [ ] 20 - 199
- [ ] 200+

### D. Other employment

27. In addition to running your own business, do you also work for someone else as an employee (i.e. Do you also have a full-time, part-time or casual job)?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Sometimes

### Other employment
### Demographic Questionnaire

28. On average, how many hours per week do you work for someone else as an employee?
- [ ] 1 - 14
- [ ] 15 - 19
- [ ] 20 - 24
- [ ] 25 - 29
- [ ] 30 - 34
- [ ] 35 - 39
- [ ] 40 - 44
- [ ] 45 - 49
- [ ] 50+

### Main activity

29. Which accounts for a larger share of your individual income?
- [ ] My business
- [ ] My paid employment
- [ ] About the same

### Future plans

30. Would you ever consider working for someone else (as an employee) instead of being self-employed?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not sure

31. Please tell us briefly why or why not.

### E. Establishment and Growth
# Demographic Questionnaire

### 32. How did you become self-employed?
- [ ] Established the business as new
- [ ] Inherited the business, or took over from a family member
- [ ] Purchased the business (including franchises)
- [ ] Other (please specify)

### Motivation

#### 33. What made you decide to become self-employed or start your own business?

### Growth

#### 34. When you started your business, what were your plans for growth?
- [ ] I planned to grow the business as big as possible.
- [ ] I planned to grow the business a little bit, and then level off.
- [ ] I planned to keep the business at a size that I could manage alone, or with a business partner.
- [ ] I did not plan for growth.
- [ ] Not sure

### Attitude to growth

#### 35. Has your attitude to growth changed?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

### Attitude to growth (continued)
## Demographic Questionnaire

36. If your attitude to growth has changed, please tell us why.

### Entrepreneurial background

37. Did you have previous experience running a business before you had children?
- Yes, I ran a business of my own
- Yes, I managed another person’s business
- No

38. Is anyone in your immediate family (including spouse, siblings, parents) entrepreneurial?
- Yes
- No

39. Do you consider yourself to be an entrepreneur?
- Yes
- No

### Professional advice

40. Did you seek any professional advice (i.e. from a lawyer, accountant, business development officer, etc.) when starting up your business?
- Yes
- No

### Business planning

41. Do you have a formal written business plan?
- Yes
- No

### Capital
### Demographic Questionnaire

**42. Approximately how much did it cost you to start up your business?**

- [ ] Less than $1,000
- [ ] $1,000 - $4,999
- [ ] $5,000 - $9,999
- [ ] $10,000 - $14,999
- [ ] $15,000 - $19,999
- [ ] $20,000 - $24,999
- [ ] $25,000 - $40,999
- [ ] $50,000 - $99,999
- [ ] More than $100,000
- [ ] Don’t know
- [ ] Other (please specify)

---

### Funding

**43. What was the main source of funding you used to set up your business?**

- [ ] Personal earnings (your salary or wages)
- [ ] Family earnings (including your partner/spouse’s salary or wages)
- [ ] Savings
- [ ] Credit card
- [ ] Bank loan
- [ ] Inheritance
- [ ] Loan from family or friends
- [ ] Outside investor (equity investor or venture capital)
- [ ] Sale of personal assets (e.g., property, shares, etc.)
- [ ] Overdrafts
- [ ] Other (please specify)

---

### Support
### Demographic Questionnaire

44. What social supports or policy measures, if any, would make life easier for self-employed working mothers?

### F. Superannuation

45. Do you make regular contributions to your superannuation or retirement account? (Including superannuation paid by your employer, if you have one.)

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

### 46. Roughly how much of your annual income do you contribute to superannuation or a retirement account?

- [ ] Less than 5 percent
- [ ] 5 percent
- [ ] More than 5 percent
- [ ] Not sure

### Superannuation co-contributions

47. Have you ever used the Australian government’s superannuation co-contribution scheme?

- [ ] Yes, once or twice
- [ ] Yes, every year
- [ ] No, I don’t know what it is
- [ ] No, I am not eligible
- [ ] No, I don’t contribute to superannuation
- [ ] Other (please specify)

### Contact details
**Demographic Questionnaire**

You're almost finished. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire.

Please provide us with your contact details so that we can reach you for the next phase of the study, the initial telephone interview of about 15 minutes.

Please be assured that all information provided in this questionnaire, including your contact details, will be kept strictly confidential. Only the researchers will have access to this information. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants and their businesses will not be identifiable in such a report.

*48. What is your first name?*

*49. What is the first initial of your last name?*

*50. What is your preferred telephone number? Please include an area code if listing a land line.*

*51. What is your email address?*

*52. What are the best days and times to reach you?*
Appendix 2.2       Interview Protocol

Participant No: ____________

Time: ________________

1. Download and print the individual response of each participant.
2. Create a separate sheet for making notes on the phone call.
3. Test and prepare audio recording
4. Set timer or clock

Introduction:

1. Hi __________. This is Meraiah Foley from the University of Sydney study on self-employed mothers. Thank you so much for volunteering to participate in this study. I am really interested to hear your story.
2. Just a few logistical things before we start. I want to let you know that this interview will be audio recorded with your permission, and to remind you that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop this interview at any time and the audio recording will be erased and your answers will not be included in the final study. You are free to withdraw from this study any time up to the publication of results without affecting your relationship with the University of Sydney.
3. Before we start, do you have any questions for me?
4. Do I have your consent to being recording?
5. [If yes] Record.
Appendix 2.3  Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Questions:

1. I see from your questionnaire that you have ____ child/children. Correct? How old is/are your child/children?

2. What are your primary child care arrangements when you are working on your business?

3. Describe a typical working day. At what times of day or days of the week do you do most of your work on your business? How do you structure your work days?

4. Tell me a bit about your business. What kind of business is it? When did you set it up? Do you work alone or with a business partner? Have employees?

5. Tell me about what you were doing before you started your business (work history, experience, etc.). Was what you were doing before related to what you are doing now, or was it completely different? Describe.

6. Tell me about why you decided to start your own business at that time. What motivated you? Did you ever consider looking for other types of employment? Did you ever consider being a stay-at-home parent?

7. How does your work situation now compare to your work situation before you became self-employed? What would you say are the major advantages of being self-employed? What are the major disadvantages or challenges?

8. Has becoming a mother changed your thoughts/ideas/attitude towards your work or your career, or not so much? Explain.

9. Tell me about your plans for your business. Would you ever consider returning to organisational employment (as an employee)? Why or why not?

10. Is there anything I haven’t asked you about that you think is relevant to this study? Please explain.
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