

# **Work and Babies: The Impact of Parenthood on Women's Work Engagement & Careers**

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This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to explore the impact of parenthood on the work engagement and career factors for Australian women. Three studies explore factors that influence a woman's engagement with professional work after having a child, and compare career aspirations and progression of women and men parents and non-parents.

Study 1 used focus groups to identify the significant elements involved in women returning to the workforce after having a child. Results directed the development of subsequent survey questions for the second study. Study 2 analysed survey data from 1185 mothers with children under the age of five years. Women who returned to the workforce reported higher levels of anxiety than those who did not, regardless of the amount of work they engaged in. The match between preferred and actual work status predicted greater emotional wellbeing, as did greater levels of social support. The strong preference for part-time work in the sample highlights how this can influence a woman's mental health and is crucial to engaging female talent in the workforce. Study 3 examined career factors of 1291 participants who were both male and female and parents and non-parents. The aim of this third study was to examine the variables that may explain the gender gaps in career attainment (pay and role level), aspiration and satisfaction for parents and non-parents. Results identified a significant overall gender gap in salary, role level, and desired career aspiration, but only for those who were parents. These differences were not present for men and women without children. When examining the variance in these scores for pay, role level and aspiration, results showed that gender alone was not a significant predictor of the gender gap in when other variables were considered. This research provides insight into the factors

associated with the gender gaps in career variables, particularly when it comes to parenthood. The results show that while constructs such as social role identity, masculinity and core self evaluation are related to career variables, the idea that men and women differ on these factors is discounted. Gender gaps in pay, role level and aspiration were found only between those who are parents, with the gendered segregation of domestic and professional work engagement being shown as drivers of this gap for this sample.

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To my mother and sisters. To all mothers and sisters. Our work is not yet done.

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## **Chapter One: Thesis Overview and Outline**

*Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth.*

*Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all. ~ Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary General, 2014.*

### **Why Study the Topic of Women and Work?**

Internationally, there has been an accelerating focus on workplace gender equality, specifically in terms of the gender pay gap (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009) and gender imbalance in leadership (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2012; Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2012; Equal Opportunity for Women Agency (EOWA), 2012; Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, 2013). This focus has partly arisen from the observation of growing female educational attainment, as across the OECD the rate of secondary and tertiary educated women has been growing rapidly over the past 10 years (OECD, 2012). It is projected that by 2025 there will be an average of 1.4 female students for every male at university. The OECD has raised concerns that women consistently earn less than men, they are less likely to progress in their careers and are more likely to live in poverty in older age. This means that economies all over the world are not fully leveraging their talent pools and wasting investment in the human capital of women (OECD, 2012).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2013), similar trends can be seen in Australia, with tertiary education attainment being even across



genders for the past 10 years, and a consistent increase in women's workforce participation, who now comprise 46% of all Australian employees (ABS, February 2014). The current status of education in Australia shows that the rates of educational attainment for women have eclipsed men in Year 12 completion rates (87.8% and 84.1% respectively), bachelor degrees (39.2% and 31.8% respectively) (ABS, 2014), and postgraduate education (5.1% and 4.9% respectively) (ABS, 2013). Despite these statistics reflecting the high engagement of females in education and the workforce, at 23.1% the 2016 gender pay gap (the difference between women's and men's average weekly full-time equivalent earnings, expressed as a percentage of men's earnings) is 6.1 percentage points higher than it was in 1996 (Cassells, Duncan & Ong, 2016; WGEA, 2014). The representation of women in senior roles also shows a gap, with women holding just 3% of chair positions and 3.5% of CEO positions in the top 200 listed companies in Australia during 2012 (WGEA, 2012). Evidence is clear that the talent pool of educated and capable women is not being reflected in pay and workforce statistics. This inequality has negative consequences not only for women, but for organisations, economies and society.

When exploring the gender gap statistics and associated literature, it becomes clear that the differing impact of parenthood is a key source of gender difference (Cassells, Miranti, Nepal, & Tanton, 2009; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2013), as it is during this phase that career trajectories of men and women increasingly deviate from one another (Watson, 2010; Sanders, Zehner, Fagg, & Hellicar, 2013), with the gender divide between professional and family life being at the heart of this issue (OECD, 2012; Bailyn, 2011).

Given that women account for 46% of the Australian workforce (ABS, 2014), and are currently underutilised, this thesis seeks to investigate—using an organisational psychology perspective—the impact of parenthood on women's

workforce participation, in an effort to better understand how we can recruit, motivate, develop, change, and inspire this large portion of the Australian talent pool.

## **Thesis Outline**

After a review of the key challenges, this thesis presents three empirical Work and Babies studies investigating factors related to the effect of parenthood on women's work status. More specifically, the content of the chapters is as follows:

**Chapter Two** explores the nature of the gender gap in terms of pay differences and representation at the most senior levels of Australian business.

**Chapter Three** explores the literature on the impact of parenthood on women (and men's) working lives, which raises a series of research questions associated with the transition to parenthood for women.

**Chapter Four** documents the first Work and Babies study. A small qualitative study to investigate the four research questions raised in Chapter Three: 1) What factors do mothers consider when making the decision to return to work or not?; 2) What are the work status preferences of mothers with young children?; 3) How strong are the financial incentives for mothers to return to work?; and 4) What influence does social support have on the lives of mothers of young children?

This study examines data collected from two focus groups with mothers of children aged under 18 months, who are or are not engaged with paid work.

**Chapter Five** builds on the findings of Study 1 with a second Work and Babies study. This quantitative survey dives deeper into the topic of work engagement for women with young children. Specifically, the analysis examines the push and pull factors related to the work status of mothers with young children. This

part of the research explores how work status, work preferences and social support is associated with the emotional experience associated with this life stage.

**Chapter Six** addresses a limitation of the first two studies: the lack of comparison between males and females when it comes to work and parenthood. The third Work and Babies study investigates how aspiration and career success differ between genders, as parents and non-parents. Including men and women with and without children is necessary to build a more complete understanding of the differences in professional work and parenthood involving factors such as desired career aspiration, objective career success, subjective career success, self-perceived masculinity and femininity, core self-evaluation, parental separation anxiety, and social role identity.

**Chapter Seven** brings the findings of these three studies together to outline the contributions of this research and identifies areas of future research.

### **A note on ‘gender’**

Throughout this thesis, ‘gender’ is presented as a binary construct of male/female. Gender is considered to be “part of a person’s personal and social identity. It refers to the way a person feels, presents and is recognised within the community. A person’s gender refers to outward social markers, including their name, outward appearance, mannerisms and dress” (Australian Government Guideline on the Recognition of Sex and Gender, 2013, p. 4). The author acknowledges sex and gender are not always the same and that the binary male/female paradigm of gender does not sufficiently recognise the full spectrum of gender diversity, which also includes transgender and intersex individuals. In 2013, the Australian Government expanded their definition of sex and gender classifications to include male, female and Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified (X) (Attorney-General's Department, 2013). While our social systems have evolved to

expand the existing constructs of gender, social science research has not. This research works within the confines of the binary framework of gender for the sake of consistency with existing (and emerging) research and workforce data.

## **Chapter Two: Workplace Gender Equality in Australia**

**The Gender Pay Gap.** The gender pay gap is the difference between women and men's average weekly full-time equivalent earnings, expressed as a percentage of men's earnings (WGEA, 2014).

In March 2016, the average full-time weekly earnings for women in Australia were 23.1% less than men (Cassells, Duncan & Ong, 2016). Over the past two decades, gap between men and women's average weekly fulltime equivalent earnings in Australia has not reduced (unlike other OECD countries), with some evidence that it might even be growing (WGEA, 2016). The gender pay gap is present at every age bracket, increasing with age. At ages 15 and 19 the gender pay gap is at its lowest (0.3%) and peaks in the 40 to 44 age bracket, where men are paid 24.3% more than women on average (ABS, August 2013).

This gender pay gap differs across sectors and industries. The gap is largest in the private sector (20.2%) as compared to the public sector (13.1%) (Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), 2014). There are also variations on this statistic across industry and occupations. Industry variance is large, ranging from over 30% in healthcare and social assistance (31.7%), financial and insurance (31.9%), though to 7.2% in wholesale trade. These variances are impacted by the occupational structures within each industry, such as a greater representation of men occupying medical specialist roles and women in caring or assistance roles in the healthcare and social assistance industry (WGEA, 2014).

As career levels progress, this pay gap grows larger, with executive pay in 2008 having a 28.3% discrepancy, over 10% higher than the Australian average at the time (EOWA, 2008). Occupational pay gap statistics show similar patterns, with the gap for 'professionals' (23.5%) and 'managers' (21.8%) higher than the national

average of 18.2% (WGEA, 2014). A study by Watson (2010) looking at top wage distribution found that female managers working full-time earn 27% less than their male colleagues, despite comparable work and similar education levels. Watson concluded that job-related characteristics cannot explain between 65% and 90% of this difference. This shows that there is a pay gap from the very beginning of a woman's career and continues to increase as she progresses (EOWA, 2008).

**Equal representation at senior levels.** Australian women are more educated than ever before, with 62% of university graduates (Graduate Careers Australia, 2012) and 51% of those with postgraduate degrees being held by females (ABS, 2013). The distribution of men and women at graduate level (Graduate Careers Australia, 2012) is reflected by similar distributions across staff and line roles in early careers (Barsh, Devillard, & Wang, 2012).

Figure 2.1 below illustrates the gendered pattern of Australia's talent pipeline, showing more female than male graduates and even numbers at the professional level, yet a large sustained gap appears at the executive management level (Sanders, Zehner, Fagg, & Hellicar, 2013).

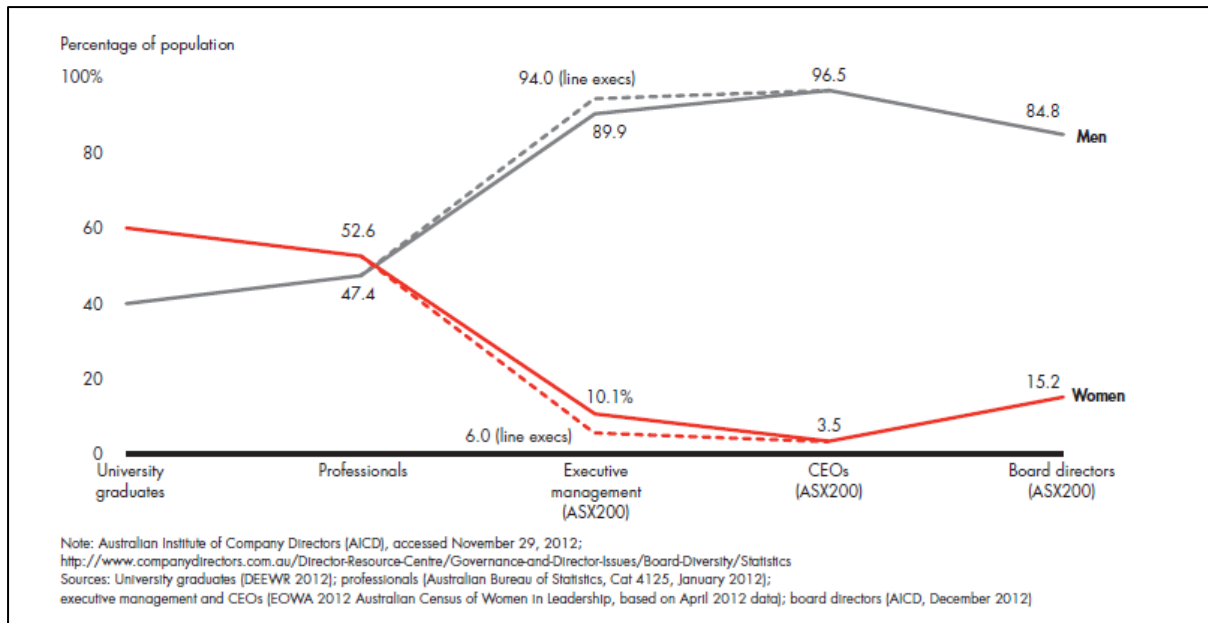


Figure 2.1 "In large corporations, men are nine time more likely than women to make it to senior executive ranks than women". Taken from Bain and Co/CEW *Creating a positive cycle: Critical steps to achieving gender parity in Australia* (2013, p. 3)

Within Australia's top 200 Public Companies (ASX200) in 2012, there were seven female CEOs (EOWA, 2012) and as at April 2014, women held 18% of board directorships (Australian Institute of Company Directors, 2014). In these companies, female board directorship numbers have hovered around 8%, with little change between 2002 and 2010. However, 2010 saw a big jump in these figures, fuelled by 25% of new appointments in that year being women (Australian Institute of Company Directors, 2014).

Despite the recent increases in the number of women on boards, in 2013, 47 of the ASX200 companies still have no female representation on their boards, indicating that there is significant progress yet to be made.

Recent gains are said to be as a result of the ASX Corporate Governance Guidelines, which came into effect in January 2011 (EOWA, 2012; KPMG, 2013). The principles and recommendations established an 'if not, why not' approach to the diversity practices of organisations. ASX-listed companies were required to report to

the Corporate Governance Council details relating to their diversity policy, their measurable objectives for achieving gender equality, and the proportion of women at senior executive and board level. These recommendations allow for companies to either adopt the principles or explain why they have not done so. Research shows that real change, in terms of improved governance and performance, happens when a board reaches one-third female representation, and that having three or more women on a board is the 'critical mass' needed to have a positive impact on boardroom dynamics (Konrad, Kramer, & Erkut, 2008) and functioning (Brown, Brown, & Anastasopoulos, 2002).

Despite evidence of the link between organisational performance and women on boards (Catalyst, 2007; McKinsey & Company, 2007), it appears that the presence of one woman does not make a significant difference to board performance (Lückerath-Rovers, 2013). At 18% of total female board directorships (Australian Institute of Company Directors, 2014) and just 3.5% of boards having three plus female directors (EOWA, 2012), achieving critical mass in Australia is still a considerable way off.

This phenomenon is not exclusive to Australia, as there are similar trends internationally. Global trends have seen a similarly small but steady increase in the number of women on boards, with the 2012 global rate of women on boards being reported at 10.5% (Gladman & Lamb, 2012). The percentages vary greatly from country to country, ranging from just 4.5% in Brazil to 36.3% in Norway (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, 2013).

Australia is now above the global average in terms of female board positions; however, when it comes to female executives, we are considerably behind other countries (EOWA, 2012). In 2012, women held 9.7% of key management personnel positions in the ASX200 listed companies, up from 8% in 2010 (EOWA, 2012). In



their 2012 Census of Women in Leadership, The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) acknowledged that this slower growth (as compared to boards) is most likely because of a governance focus on board representation. This slower growth further exacerbates the pipeline challenge, as the talent pool for board appointments is narrow (EOWA, 2012).

**Equal participation in part-time and flexible work.** Men's use of part-time or flexible work options in Australia is much lower than women's (Pocock, Skinner, & Ichii, 2009; Moorehead, 2005). Part-time work is considered one of many Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), however it is important to note that flexibility and part-time work are not synonymous, as part-time work can be inflexible in nature (O'Leary & Russell, 2012). Workplace flexibility is defined as the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks (Hill et al., 2008). Hence, flexibility is about an employees' perceived ability to choose how they arrange their work and life tasks and feel in control.

Table 2.1 illustrates that women who are in the Australian labour force are more likely to be in part-time employment than men. As a percentage of the female labour force 44% of women work part-time, whilst for men it is only 16%. The percentage of females in part-time employment (44%) is much higher than the 2012 OECD average of 26.4% (OECD, 2012), indicating that the rate of female part-time employment amongst the employed population of Australians is comparatively high.

**Table 2.1: Labour Force, Australia, June 2013 (ABS, 2014)**

	<b>Part-time</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>
<b>Male</b>	16.3%	78.0%	5.6%
<b>Female</b>	44.0%	50.5%	5.5%

Women accounted for 70% of all part-time employees in Australia between 2010 and 2011. The underemployment rate (wanting to work more hours) has been

shown to be higher for women (9%) than men (5%), which is partly attributed to the higher rate of female part-time employment (ABS, 2012).

Consistent with many other countries, when the total hours in paid and unpaid work are considered, men and women do not significantly differ in the hours they 'work'. Men engage in more market (paid) work and women more domestic (unpaid) work (Burda, Hamermesh, & Weil, 2013). These higher domestic workloads carried by women are reflected in their rates of part-time employment.

Part-time work is associated with slower career and pay growth, referred to as a 'part-time penalty' (Manning & Petrongolo, 2008). With the over-representation of women in these roles, they can incur a reduced level of promotional opportunities and career plateaus (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010), as part-time roles are considered to be career limiting (O'Leary & Russell, 2012).

Research indicates that there is a general reluctance by men to use family-friendly work arrangements because of the (either perceived or actual) impact on their jobs, their personal identity and career progression (Bittman, Hoffman, & Thompson, 2004). Men are more likely to want to work full-time, and women are twice as likely to request flexible work arrangements (Pocock, Skinner, & Ichii, 2009). In addition, higher paid men are less likely to request flexible work arrangements than lower paid men, but the patterns for women are consistent across all income levels (Coffman & Hagey, 2010). Many employees in Australia who wish to change their current work arrangements do not make use of their right to request flexible work, for fear that their request will be denied and they will suffer negative repercussions, such as supervisors viewing these requests negatively (Pocock, Skinner, & Williams, 2012).

Flexibility is most often thought of in terms of a women's role juggling her family and her career. It is when children are young that men spend long hours at

work, due to this time period often overlapping with them establishing their careers (Bittman, Hoffman, & Thompson, 2004). The Pregnancy and Employment Transitions Survey (PaETS) found that of women in paid work with children under two years old, 84% work part-time, whereas 86% of their partners worked full-time (ABS, 2011). Of these women, 86% used some type of flexible work arrangement, whereas 26% of their partners used flexible working arrangements to assist with the care of the child/ren. Over half of the partners (52%) said that flexible work arrangements were not available or they did not know if they were available (ABS, 2011).

A report from the Diversity Council of Australia on men and flexibility (O'Leary & Russell, 2012) highlights that while 79% of young fathers would prefer to choose their start and finish times, only 41% actually do. Similarly, 79% of young fathers prefer to work a compressed work week, but only 24% do. The report also indicates that 37% of young fathers have seriously considered leaving their jobs because of a lack of flexibility.

## **The Incentive for Closing the Gaps**

In the Australian business community there is a strong perception of the benefits of gender parity, with many individuals believing that it should be a strategic imperative for their organisations (Sanders, Zehner, Fagg, & Hellicar, 2013). Following is a summary of the business incentives for closing the gap, with a more detailed literature review in Appendix A.

**Stronger financial performance.** Organisations with greater female representation at senior levels (both at board and executive levels) have been shown to outperform others. For example, corporate performance increases significantly when management committees comprise of at least 30% women (Konrad, Kramer, &

Erkut, 2008; Desvaux & Baumgarten, 2007), and organisations headed by female CEOs have been shown to perform on average 15% higher than their industry average and higher than the overall market by 28% (Ozanian, 2010). The results of a 2009 study of 506 U.S. businesses showed that those with high levels of gender diversity reported higher than average percentages of market share and profitability, as compared to organisations with low or medium diversity levels. It was reported that diversity (racial and gender) had a positive correlation, accounting for around 6% of the variance in sales revenue and 4% of the variance in customer numbers (Herring, 2009). The specific link between gender equality in board composition and organisational outcomes has been strong and consistent (McKinsey & Company, 2007; Brown, Brown, & Anastasopoulous, 2002; Catalyst Information Centre, 2011; Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2012). In their 2011 Catalyst report, Carter & Wagner found evidence that companies with three or more female board directors outperformed those with none, with an 84% difference on 'return on sales', a 60% difference on 'return on invested capital', and 46% difference on 'return on equity'. In addition, a recent study by Credit Suisse (2012) found that companies with female board directors outperformed those with none by 17% to 26%, with a 4% higher return on equity, lower gearing and higher average growth.

While there are no overall differences in behaviour between men and women in senior roles (Nielsen & Huse, 2010), the presence of female executives and board members has been shown to have a positive impact on organisation performance through influencing strategic tasks as a result of offering diverse perspectives (Torchia, Calabro, & Huse, 2011) and influencing decision making (Nielsen & Huse, 2010). It is the diversity of perspective and heuristics that an underrepresented group can bring that allows for difficult problems to be seen differently and a variety of solutions to be considered that increases the performance of the group (Page,

2007). In this way, it is not inferred that women are in any way superior or higher performing than men, but indicates the role that diversity plays in team or organisational performance.

Despite these data, it is unknown whether it is the impact of the women on company performance, or whether organisations that have systems in place that facilitate women getting to the top are performing better. The reasons behind these links are untested, as Lückerath-Rovers (2013, p. 507) explains “having women on the board is a logical consequence of a more innovative, modern, and transparent enterprise where all levels of the company achieve high performance”. However, direct links have been made between strong company performance and the number of women on boards.

**Attracting talent.** There is much discussion on how to attract, manage and retain the best talent to maintain a competitive advantage. According to the Manpower Group’s 2013 Talent Shortage Survey (Manpower, 2013), 45% of Australian employers report having difficulty filling roles due to not finding the right talent, with an increasing number saying that this has a direct impact on their ability to meet client needs. Organisations that attract both male and female talent have access to the entire talent pool, ensuring they can maintain a competitive advantage by selecting the best talent (OECD, 2012).

Talent shortage is a global challenge, but it has been argued that predicted future talent shortages could be largely avoided if female workforce participation increased. McKinsey Global Institute’s *The World at Work* report (Dobbs et al., 2012) projects that, based on current patterns of educational attainment and demand growth, employers in advanced economies face a shortage of 38 to 40 million high skilled workers. The figure drops to three million if the rate of employment of women were to rise to the same levels as men. This report states “many nations can narrow

the skill gap by raising the labour force participation rate of college-educated women and keeping older high-skill workers in the labour force” (Dobbs et al., 2012, p. 3).

In Australia, future labour challenges are predicted due to a structurally ageing workforce (Fulton, Finnigan, Pearman, & Raupach, 2012). With increasing global demand for highly skilled labour (McKinsey Global Institute, 2012) and a shrinking talent pool, the full utilisation of female talent is an imperative (Ernst & Young, 2013). However, as discussed in Chapter One, the significant resource of educated women is not being reflected in their representation at executive, CEO and board levels in Australia or across the globe. This is what many organisations refer to as the pipeline challenge: how do we attract, retain and progress these talented women that are there at entry level but do not progress to the top (Davies E. M., 2011).

**Positive organisational outcomes of diversity.** Positive outcomes have been associated with diversity in organisations. For example, diversity in teams has been linked to enhanced innovation and problem-solving capacity (Page, 2007; Hong & Page, 2004; Kurtulus, 2011), perceptions of a culture that values diversity is positively linked to employee satisfaction, engagement and retention (McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007). In addition, female board representation has been shown to have a positive impact on corporate reputation, especially those who operate closely with the final customer (Brammer, Millington, & Pavelin, 2009). For more details on these processes, see a literature summary in Appendix A.

**The broader economic argument.** The 2012 OECD report on the gender gap in education, employment and entrepreneurship (OECD, 2012) emphasises that persistent gender pay and workforce utilisation inequality in adult years means countries, such as Australia, are foregoing the economic contribution of women, not

fully utilising the available talent pool, and wasting the investments made in women's education. To measure the capacity for growth in the current labour force and productivity potential, the ABS combines the unemployment, underemployment and marginal labour force attachment (those who want to work and are either actively looking for work, but were not able to start immediately or not actively looking for but were available to start work within four weeks) metrics to calculate the labour underutilisation rate. For the 2012–2013 reporting period, this rate for Australian men is 9.4% of the labour force. For women, this rate is higher at 13.3%, illustrating the large underused resource of female talent in Australia (ABS, 2014).

In 2009, the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) used a macroeconomic modelling technique to determine the economic impact of the gender pay gap (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009). These results indicated that eliminating the pay gap would increase Australia's economic performance by 8.5% of GDP, which was valued at \$93 billion. NATSEM's diagnostic analysis of this negative impact on Australia's macroeconomic performance found that this comes from the associated disincentive to work more hours, because women's earnings are lower than men's.

## **Chapter Three: The Impact of Parenthood on Women's Careers**

The causes of the gender pay gap and imbalance in senior roles can be partially explained by the gender segregation of industries and occupations, differences in workforce participation, greater female representation in casual and part-time work, use of flexible work arrangements, and gender stereotypes and gender bias in the workplace. Appendix B presents a literature review of these factors.

This chapter explores parenthood and gender differences in domestic and professional work spheres, as it is during this phase that career trajectories of men and women increasingly deviate from one another.

The literature raises a number of research questions associated with the phase of the transition to parenthood, especially for women, which contribute to this gender divide. Specifically, why do some women return to work and others do not? Of those who do, are there differences between those who work part-time or full-time?

### **Work and Babies**

At 62% of tertiary graduates and 52.6% of professionals, women enter the workforce as the majority. As illustrated in Figure 2.1 in chapter two, it appears that it is the mid-career level, where people approach the stage of becoming parents that career trajectories and pay of men and women begin to sharply deviate. With the expanding divide between men and women at work as they approach middle age, these trends point towards the differing impact of parenthood on men and women as an explanatory variable.



For both men and women in Australia, being promoted was more likely for those aged under 40 years. Concurrently, the occurrence of pregnancy, birth or adoption was by far the greatest in the 25 to 39 years age group (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011). It is during this time of high career growth and potential that individuals are often starting a family. It is within this age bracket that the average age of a women having her first child (30.7 years) falls, indicating that on average, it is the age bracket in which female employees are identified as having high potential to transition to parenthood and take extended leave.

A 2013 survey by Bain and Co. and Chief Executive Women (Sanders, Zehner, Fagg, & Hellicar, 2013) concluded that the high intensity of increasing work and family demands between the ages of 30 to 39 means that many women miss out on the career surge and the professional confidence that comes with it. In this survey, Sanders et al. (2013) illustrate that it is the middle years of a woman's career (junior/middle management) that is the most crucial for career acceleration, yet it is at this stage that organisational advocacy for women drops off and they are most likely to experience competing conflicts between work and family (as compared to other career stages).

In Australia, there has been a trend of increasing maternal employment, as well as a rise in the numbers of dual income families (ABS, 2009). Data show that engagement in paid work by mothers is influenced by the age of their youngest child, with the proportion of mothers in paid work increasing as the age of the youngest child increases. As shown in Table 3.1 below, this pattern has been consistent over the past 13 years.

**Table 3.1: Employment status of mothers – family characteristics, Australia, 2009–2010 (ABS, 2011)**

Employment status of mothers by family type (youngest child aged 0–4 years)	1997	2003	2006–2007	2009–2010
	%	%	%	%
Employed mothers in couple families with children	46	51	51	51

Employed mothers in lone mother families	28	33	34	28
Youngest child is dependent aged 15-24				
Employed mothers in couple families with children	71	74	80	81
Employed mothers in lone mother families	69	76	71	83
Total families with dependent children				
Employed mothers in couple families with children	59	64	66	66
Employed mothers in lone mother families	46	50	58	60

Underlying many of the factors that drive gender inequity (such as bias and occupational segregation) are the social roles that men and women acquire both in the home and in the workplace (Burda, Hamermesh, & Weil, 2013).

### **Returning to Work after Childbirth**

While the literature shows there is a differing impact of parenthood on men and women's career, it is unclear why some mothers of young children return to work (either part-time or full-time) while others do not.

The evidence (Millward, 2006; James, 2008; Baird, Whitehouse, & Hosking, 2008) suggests that the factors that influence a woman returning to work after childbirth are a combination of personal circumstances, preferences, and external constraints that influence whether or not women return to work, and in what capacity.

A person's preference or orientation towards home or work can affect how they make decisions on how to balance work and home (James, 2008). A woman's work preference may predict whether she is likely to return to her previous role after childbirth. Hakim's work preference theory (Hakim, 2002) proposes that a work-centred woman is highly likely to come back to work if it is economically viable, whereas a home-centred woman is most likely to not return, unless she has to for financial reasons. It may be that the work-centred woman gets paid more and therefore has a greater incentive, whereas those who are home-centred think it is more appropriate to not work. However, as Leahy and Doughney (2006) explain, it

would be an error to conclude that work preferences have a greater impact on a woman's work status than the external constraints, or to assume that these preferences do not change over time (Leahy & Doughney, 2006). It is more commonly assumed that both preferences and circumstances are factors in the decision of a woman's return to work after childbirth (Millward, 2006).

*Research Question One: What factors do mothers' consider when making the decision about engaging in paid work or not after having a child?*

**Mother's return to work preferences.** As shown by labour force statistics, part-time employment is the most common work status for women with young children, but the precise work preferences of this population are unknown. Between 2012 and 2013, the under-employment rate was much higher for women than men (8.6% vs. 4.8%) (ABS, 2014), indicating that not all women are able to freely choose their participation based on their work preferences alone. Constraints, such as access to part-time or flexible roles, access to quality and affordable childcare as well as the associated career penalties that act as a deterrent, may result in mothers of young children not being able to achieve their preferred work status.

Australian economic data also indicates that the decision to return to work can be complicated (Cassells, Miranti, Nepal, & Tanton, 2009). For example, the financial gain from increased working hours are offset by costs of childcare, increased taxation, and loss of government benefits, which can create a disincentive to increase workforce participation (Cassells, Miranti, Nepal, & Tanton, 2009). Even if the secondary income earner (typically the mother in a coupled family) wanted to return to paid employment after a child, there is sometimes little financial incentive to do so. Despite this, there are few current insights as to why women do and do not re-enter the workforce after children.

*Research Question Two: What are the work status preferences of mothers with young children?*

**Reasons to work.** The “meaning of work” literature proves a good theoretical framework as to why people work. From this perspective, ‘work’ means different things to different people. It is often more than just the means of financial support, but also an important element of life that meets people’s psychological and social needs (Fasbender, Wang, Voltmer, & Deller, 2015).

James’ study (2008) reported that access to financial resources is more likely to affect the freedom of choice a woman has. Higher socio-economic status women report that they are much more liberated in their choices between work and family. Professional women explained that it is fairly easy for them to move from full-time employed to full-time homemaker because they have a choice to pay for childcare and go back or give up their jobs if they want.

*Research Question Three: How strong is the financial incentive for mothers to return to work?*

**Work life balance and social support.** Balancing both professional and caring work demands has been shown to be a source of work-life conflict and strain (Greenhaus & Powell, 2003; Quick, Henley, & Quick, 2004). Stress is considered one of the many contributing factors of gender imbalance for women in senior roles, with women being three times more likely than men to opt out of careers with highly stressful components (Coffman & Hagey, 2010). It has been suggested (Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2004) that professional work cultures of long hours, which are often associated with managerial roles, have a disproportionately greater impact on women than men, due to competing demands for their time. However, high workloads alone cannot be attributed to this association. While high levels of job

demands negatively affect a person's home life, longer hours do not equate directly to higher work-life conflict, as high job control can actually reduce this reported conflict (Gronlund, 2007).

The 2011 HILDA survey (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011) found that work-family stress is more common in mothers who work full-time, with 11% reporting high stress, as compared to 5% of those who work part-time. This indicates that multiple roles in paid and domestic work are beneficial for a person up until the point that the demands become too great (Fredriksen-Goldsen & Scharlach, 2001).

Karasek's Job-Demands-Control model provides a framework within which to understand job related stress (Karasek, 1979). This model explains that the demands of a role, combined with the control an individual has to influence the way the role is fulfilled, predicts the strain an individual will experience: highly demanding roles with low levels of control result in stress, whereas high demand and high control roles can be active and stimulating. In this context, social support has been shown to be just as important as control over tasks, mitigating against job strain (Sargent & Terry, 2000). The negative relationship between social support and stress has been long established (Dignam & West, 1998). Research by Ertel, Koenen and Berkman (2008) concluded that social support moderates job strain and that this is particularly important for people with children. The research of Parasuraman, Greenhaus and Granrose (1992) on dual career couples found that support from colleagues has a positive effect on job satisfaction for men and women, while spousal support was associated with women's family satisfaction.

*Research Question Four: What influence does social support have on the lives of mothers of young children?*

## **Chapter Four: Work and Babies Study One**

### **(Small Group Qualitative Research)**

As explored in Chapter Three, women's engagement with paid work may be influenced by parenthood and it is at the pivotal point of transitioning into parenthood and raising young children that the most dramatic distinction between men and women at work and home appears. What is less well understood are the specific experiences that are likely to influence women's work-related choices during the time when they have infant children. This current study seeks to investigate why some women return to work during this life stage, yet others do not.

Before commencing the quantitative data collection stage of the research presented in this thesis, a sample of mothers with young children were consulted in focus groups. The primary aim was to explore the research questions identified in Chapter Three with groups of mothers of young children, and by so doing identify factors that should be included in the subsequent survey study.

Two focus group sessions were conducted. Session one included mothers who had returned to work with children under 18 months. Session two included mothers who worked during pregnancy, but had not returned to work within 18 months post birth. The four research questions identified in the previous chapter were:

1. What factors do mothers consider when making the decision about engaging in paid work or not after having a child?
2. What are the work status preferences of mothers with young children?
3. How strong is the financial incentive for a mother to return to work?
4. What influence does social support have on the lives of mothers of young children?

## Method

**Participants.** Group one included six women who had returned to paid employment with children under 18 months old. Group two included six women who had not returned to work within 18 months or more post childbirth. Eleven participants were recruited from a Sydney playgroup and one participant was known to the researcher and invited to attend.

**Table 4.1: Group one – mothers of children under 18 months who work in paid employment || W&B I**

Name*	Age	Number of children	Professional role	Return status
Mathilda	36	3	Small business owner	Full-time
Olivia	36	2	Strategic manager	Part-time
Rebecca	42	3	Health services manager	Full-time
Sally	36	2	Insurance technician	Part-time
Laura	30	1	Retail buyer	Full-time
Ava	37	2	Teacher	Part-time

**Table 4.2: Group two – mothers of children under 18 months who are full-time homemakers || W&B I**

Name*	Age	Number of children	Professional role
Ashleigh	35	2	Regulatory manager, consumer healthcare
Jessica	42	2	Management consultant
Michaela	29	1	Public servant
Danielle	43	1	Administration
Louise	43	2	Office manager
Sienna	36	2	IT manager

**\*Names have been changed for confidentiality purposes (not real names).**

**Measures.** Based on the four research questions, the following questions were explored in focus group one. Note that these focus groups were conducted prior to the introduction of government funded paid parental leave.

- In what capacity do you work (full-time or part-time)?
- What age was your child/ren when you returned?
- What were your reasons for returning when you did?
- If you were to take money out of the equation, would you have gone back to work when you did?
- What are the biggest challenges you faced when going back to work?

- Any particular work-life balance challenges?
- How has your self-identity changed since you became a mum? Is your profession a big part of that?
- How important is having a support network? What do you rely on them for?
- What family friendly HR practices are available to you or your partner? What practices would make your life easier?

The following topics were explored in group two:

- Why have you not returned to work?
- Did you have access to maternity leave?
- What factors contributed to you being at home full-time?
- Are you out of the workforce by choice?
- Do you plan on returning? When? In what capacity?
- What would an employer need to offer in order to make it worthwhile?
- What about finances? How have you managed on one income?
- How has your self-identity changed since you became a mum? Is your profession a big part of that?
- How important is having a support network? What do you rely on them for?

**Procedure.** Both sessions ran for approximately two hours. All participants were briefed via email as to the aim of the focus groups as part of their invitation to attend. At the beginning of both sessions, all participants were informed about the nature of the research and how the focus group would be run. Each participant signed a consent form before proceeding [as approved by the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee (HE25SEP2009-M00131)]. The two sessions were facilitated by the researcher, assisted by a colleague who took notes during both sessions.

Discussions in both sessions were allowed to progress naturally, with little prompting by the facilitator. All planned topics were covered in each session, as each group appeared cognisant of the aim of the research and were focused on the topic.



Gaining insights from both groups occurred with ease, as this seems to be a topic that the participants were eager to share. Both sessions occurred within an informal, semi-structured setting.

## **Results and Discussion**

For detailed results see Appendix C. For case studies, see Appendix D.

*Research Question One: What factors do mothers consider when making the decision to return to work or not?*

### **Group One: Employed Mothers**

*"[My past employer] told me I had to come back full-time, or nothing. I chose nothing. I realised I had to start my own business to get the flexibility I needed."*

*"I didn't want to lose what I had worked so hard to achieve."*

### **Group Two: Full-time Homemakers**

*"I would happily work part-time, but I was made redundant, so I have no job to go back to. There are no part-time jobs out there for me to even apply for."*

*"I had a great job that I could go back to, but my children are my priority – I didn't want someone else bringing up my children"*

*"If in 5 years time I look back and I've damaged my career, I can live with that. If in 5 years time I look back and I've affected my children. Well, I can't undo that."*

**Emotions.** Full-time homemakers presented as much more open to talking about their experiences, requiring less prompting. The emotion behind their decisions was quite salient, as many said they chose to be home because of their love for their children, how much they enjoy being around them, and because of their concern for leaving them in other's care.

For the working mothers, they reported feeling judged negatively when they returned to work. They felt they had to justify why they were returning and make a point that their children still came first.

Full-time homemakers expressed concern over child safety, wellbeing and quality of care more than the working mothers. It seemed as though this concern is one factor preventing these mothers from leaving their children to be cared by others.

**A long break makes it hard to go back.** Women who had taken longer career breaks found it challenging to re-enter the workforce. It appeared that those who did not have maternity leave (resigning from their jobs or being made redundant) particularly faced this challenge. Those who had jobs to return to, due to maternity leave, indicated that they transitioned to part-time roles more easily. There was general agreement that mothers who returned to work found that taking more than 12 months off made it harder to return to their previous work roles due to changes that have occurred in the workplace during their absence.

**Choice.** All women in this study emphasised that their situation is a result of their choices. One participant expressed that the challenges she faced trying to re-enter work or study were too great, so she chose to be a full-time mother. None of the women in this study expressed an opinion that they were in a situation that was not of their choosing.

**Good mother or good employee?** In the full-time homemaker group, prioritising being a good mother over one's professional role was expressed: "*my children are my priority*" [Sienna, full-time homemaker]. The binary choice between being either one or the other was part of the narrative for some mothers choosing to leave their professional roles. Much of the language used was framed around choosing between work and motherhood, with a small group of working mothers

feeling the need to address these assumptions and defend the idea that they can be both committed to their families *and* their careers. While these decisions were typically framed as free choice, it was clear that there were consistent boundaries in which these choices are made (such as domestic workloads, parental leave, and access to part-time work). The role of the mother having primary commitment to her children over and above everything else was reflected in the concerns raised about leaving their child in the care of others, partner support to stay at home, and the attitude of colleagues in the workplace all being raised as topics.

*Research Question Two: What are the work status preferences of mothers with young children?*

#### **Group One: Employed Mothers**

*“When I had my first son, no one else at work had kids. The support and options offered were really poor. I have found it much better in a different team where people I work with have kids too – they know what it’s like.”*

*“I work part-time. There is a real perception that working less means less commitment to work. Arriving late occasionally after dropping kids off at daycare has also had a real impact on my career.”*

#### **Group Two: Full-time Homemakers**

*“Working part-time means you either go back to a crap job part-time or be expected to still have a full-time workload, while getting paid less.”*

**Part-time work, flexibility and people’s attitudes.** Mothers in both groups in this study showed a preference for part-time work. Despite this, it was

assumed that gaining part-time work usually means reduced access to rewarding or challenging work and stalling of career progression.

Workplace flexibility was reported as being the most important feature of an attractive role. Two participants who returned to inflexible workplaces or a requirement for full-time work had resigned. Another important aspect of work reported by participants was the attitude of those they work with – three employed mothers explained how they felt judged by others for returning to work and all explained that having to take time off to care for sick children was the biggest challenge they faced.

*Research Question Three: How strong is the financial incentive for mothers' to return to work?*

#### **Group One: Employed Mothers**

*"[I returned full-time] because I love my job. I have invested a lot into the role. I couldn't watch someone else do it. I have spent a lot of time and effort on building my career and reputation."*

#### **Group Two: Full-time Homemakers**

*"After eight cycles of IVF, I wanted to spend time with my child. There was no financial pressure to go back. I might have gone back if I had a fantastic job to go back to."*

*"Returning to my old role would have meant a huge demotion."*

*"I'm just having too much fun!"*

**It is not just about the money.** For the working mothers, money was not a salient factor for four out of six participants. In those cases, it was more about maintaining a professional reputation, keeping up-to-date and maintaining

networks. An emphasis was expressed about future career options and growth, but not immediate financial gain. Concerns were expressed about future career progression and earnings potential diminishing when away from professional work for too long. These working mothers expressed concerns to maintain something they had worked so hard to build up. Their job was something they had pride in, their reputation was riding on certain project performances and they were motivated to return so that their hard work was not undone. However, this sentiment was not unanimous, as one mum in group two noted that for her, *“it’s just a job”*.

Women in both groups explained that if they felt they were given few options and forced to return in a way they were not comfortable with, they usually left their job and explored other options, such as working for themselves, or not working at all.

For those who were not working, the mothers fell into two categories: those who had the financial support of their partner or were financially prepared to stay at home, and those who were not working due to inability to re-enter the workforce, given their caring responsibilities or part-time work preferences.

Interestingly, neither group were enthusiastic about discussing finances. They seemed reluctant to discuss this and focused on other factors that affected their decisions, such as access to suitable work, partner support and childcare.

*Research Question Four: What influence does social support have on the lives of mothers of young children?*

### **Group One: Employed Mothers**

*"I do feel that people judge me for returning to work full-time. As though I am more committed to my career than my kids. But I work for my kids, so that we have a future. I love both my job and my kids, but people don't get it."*

*"I couldn't do it without my parents. With childcare, they [children] pick things up things [illness] from other kids and you have to take time off when they get sick. My mum and dad always look after him, sick or not."*

*"Having a mentor who is five years ahead of me in her family plan has really helped. She has been there and done that."*

### **Group Two: Full-time Homemakers**

*"Truthfully, I never thought I wouldn't go back. But when my maternity leave was about to end, I said to my husband 'I'm worried about going back to work'. He agreed that it would be hard on us if I returned and supported my decision to be a stay at home mum. I just couldn't leave my child."*

*"I don't have grandparents that I can trust to look after my kids. It's 100% up to me."*

The importance of the social support network was an expressed value by mothers in group one. In group two, those who were not working but had a preference to do so indicated that a lack of support contributed to their sense of responsibility for the care of the children and was something they wish they had. In both groups, the size of the social network was not identified, rather, it was the quality of the social support in terms of how reliable those people were and how integral they were to their regular functioning that was discussed. It was reported

that having good support was an important factor in whatever choice they made in either staying at home or returning to work.

**Conclusion and direction for quantitative research.** This qualitative study of women with young children sought to gain insight into the work status of mothers with young children. This study indicated that there are three areas to explore further: first, the push and pull factors related to the work status of mothers with young children; and second, how work status, work preferences and social support impact the emotional experience of women in this life stage.

Given that work and motherhood are such a complicated dynamic, it is an ambitious goal to explore the many intricate details that influence a mother's return to paid work after childbirth. The focus groups served to clarify the most pertinent questions not yet fully explored in existing literature. It was discovered that much is still not known (even by mothers themselves) about why some women go back to work after childbirth while others do not.

## **Chapter Five: Work and Babies Study Two**

The qualitative study reported in Chapter Four of this thesis and literature reviews provide insight for the direction for a quantitative study on the work status and experience of mothers. Specifically, this current study examines push and pull factors related to the work status of mothers with young children, and how work status, work status preferences and social support impact the emotional experience associated with this life stage.

In this chapter, there are two components. In the first part, the push and pull factors related to the work status of mothers of young children will be investigated. Following this, the focus moves to investigating the experience of women during this life stage, as it relates to their engagement in paid work.

### **Push and Pull Factors Related to the Work Status of Mothers of Young Children**

When exploring the literature of work engagement and meaning of work, there are parallels between research of work engagement in women and retirees, as both comprise a hidden reserve of qualified labour that are often ignored. The underutilisation of this talent can hinder economic growth (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009; International Labour Office, 2010), which can be addressed by removing barriers for both women who care and older people from engaging in professional work (OECD, 2006, 2012) As highlighted by Fasbender, Wang, Voltmer and Deller (2015), the empirical investigation into decision making regarding employment of this demographic is important for society, organisations and individuals.



‘Work’ means different things to different people. It is often more than just the means of financial support, as an important element of life that meets people’s psychological and social needs (Fasbender, Wang, Voltmer, & Deller, 2015).

Existing literature on work engagement and retirement provides frameworks that guide the investigation into mother’s engagement with work. For example, research into retirement decisions classifies factors that influence work status as either ‘push’ or ‘pull’ (Schultz, Morton, & Weckerle, 1998). In this context, push factors are considered to be those with negative considerations, such as poor health or working conditions, whereas pull factors are typically positive, such as the desire to pursue interests outside of work. It is recognised that classifying factors as either push or pull is complex, due to the dynamic perceptions and contexts that differ from case to case. It is the combinations of these push and pull factors that can determine the satisfaction with the decision to be engaged with work or not (Schultz, Morton, & Weckerle, 1998). The first Work and Babies study illuminated some of the push and pull factors associated with women’s engagement with work after childbirth, those that were relevant to avoid negative consequences (push) and those that acted as incentives to not engage with paid work (pull).

Professional variables including earnings penalties, or losses in professional networks and career growth would be considered to be motivating factors that push mothers towards engaging in paid work. These can be measured through role factors of higher pay, skill level, time invested in their roles and career trajectories in larger firms, where there is more to lose.

A key push factor likely to determine a mother’s work status is financial. Having children has been shown to negatively affect a woman’s earnings trajectory (Wilde, Batchelder, & Ellwood, 2010). Upon returning to work from maternity leave, a woman is subject to a 7% pay gap and this widens to 12% over the next three years

(Baker, 2011). The causes of this are linked to the bias that result in mothers being held to strict performance standards (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004), being considered worthy of lower salaries (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007), and less appealing for promotional and training opportunities (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glisk, 2004). Econometricians have reported that over a woman's life cycle, raising children accounts for a 17% loss in wages (Adda, Dustmann, & Stevensz, 2010). This decrease is said to be due to two factors: lack of accumulation of human capital due to career breaks and the movement into mother-friendly occupations.

Taking maternity leave has a negative effect on wage growth and this pay penalty increases with the length of the maternity leave (Baker, 2011; Jaumotte, 2004). In Australia, it appears that once a woman returns to work after maternity leave, she experiences a pay penalty that widens over the subsequent three years. The 2011 HILDA report (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011) found that women who take maternity leave have a 4.4% lower average pay one year after returning, as compared to colleagues who were previously on the same pay. Within three years, this gap widens to 12.3%. Women who return to work after maternity leave tend to incur an hourly rate decrease, whereas their co-workers experience an average 4% rise in this same time period. It can be argued that this 'wage penalty' is a result of slower wages growth on return from a career break (Adda, Dustmann, & Stevensz, 2010).

A second push factor affecting work status is skill level. Mothers who return to their roles within the first year of their child's life are most often professionals who go back part-time (Society for Research in Child Development, 2010). It is hypothesised that these professional women not only return sooner, due to the financial rewards that make childcare more affordable and avoidance of pay penalties, but also because they have more to lose (reputation, knowledge,

promotional opportunities, etc.) and the association with their self-esteem (James, 2008). It has been found that the more a woman has invested in her professional career prior to having children, the more likely it is that she will not take her full maternity leave entitlements: she will leave her role later in the pregnancy and return sooner than lower skilled women (Millward, 2006).

Higher skilled, professional women incur a greater earning penalty as a result of having children (Wilde, Batchelder, & Ellwood, 2010). A low skilled woman will lose 10% to 14% of her potential lifetime earnings when becoming a mother, whereas a high skilled woman will lose 21% to 33%. Even if women continue to work full-time at their same employer, on average their wage growth slows and over time their pay appears to be 14% lower. Marital status does not affect these results of childbearing pay penalties (Wilde, Batchelder, & Ellwood, 2010).

While the extant research provides insight into these two incentives (finance and skill level) for returning to work in some capacity, factors that relate to a woman returning to her role full-time or part-time are less well understood. This will be investigated in this study.

Participants in the first Work and Babies study described push factors, such as investment in their existing roles and networks (measured in this study via role tenure), and perceived that promotional or career trajectories, which may be available in large organisations that have senior executive or board positions, as compared to small organisations where the possibility for advancement may be less clear (as measured by small, medium and large organisation size).

The experience of motherhood and prioritisation of the role of parenting over paid work is hypothesised to be a pull factor that is negatively related to women's engagement with work while they are parenting young children. The findings of study one illustrate the perception of competing commitments for many women:

wishing to be good at their work and also be a good mother (Eagly, 1987; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glisk, 2004). It is often assumed that mothers provide the physical care needed by their children (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004), making it difficult to fully engage in paid work while their children are young and domestic workload high. Women who change from being strongly committed to the labour market and switch their focus to the family by staying at home or reducing their work hours explain that this shift was due to the unexplained emotional transformation that occurred when their child was born (James, 2008). Others explain that as a strategy to reconcile this desire to fulfil both work and caring roles, with Australian women often working part-time or casually (The Work and Family Policy Roundtable, 2013).

*Hypothesis 1: The positive experience of motherhood pulls women away from paid work, and role factors (salary, skill level, tenure, and organisation size) push them towards it - engagement in paid work will be negatively related to the positive experience of motherhood and positively related to role factors of salary, perceived skill level, role tenure, and organisation size.*

**Returning to work and organisational commitment.** One of the biases that exist for mothers at work is the assumption that when women become parents, their commitment to work declines (Halpert, Wilson, & Hickman, 1993; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). When returning to work after childbirth, 82% of Australian mothers do so in a part-time capacity (ABS, 2011). As shown in the first qualitative study in this thesis, mothers report that working part-time is often judged as an indication of lower ambition or organisational commitment. However, the idea that individuals work less hours due to lower levels of ambition has been rejected, as

past research has shown that women in part-time work do not feel adequately challenged or supported to pursue their ambitions (Peters, Bleijenbergh, & Poutsma, 2010). It has been argued that women working part-time are often perceived as less ambitious due to high levels of job satisfaction and low desire to change their hours to full-time (Booth & van Ours, 2013).

Despite agreeing that part-time work means a loss of career mobility, women who work part-time describe their ambitions to be directed towards individual development, personal growth and mastering their jobs. This indicates that although many women working part-time may accept that their career growth has been stalled, this does not imply a loss of ambition, but illustrates the challenge for these women to express their ambition in a socially acceptable way (Benschop, van den Brink, Doorewaard, & Leenders, 2013).

The relationship between organisational commitment and intent to return to work after childbirth is less well understood. A study conducted by Lyness, Thompson, Francesco and Judiesch (1999) explored a similar hypothesis: that organisational commitment may be related to the timing of maternity leave and the timing of return. This study did not find any significant relationship between these variables. For the Work and Babies study, this will be revisited two decades later, with updated definitions of organisational commitment, and surveying women who are not in pregnancy, but mothers of young children.

*Hypothesis 2: For the subjects currently on maternity leave, intention to return after maternity leave is positively related to organisational commitment.*

## The Impact of Work Status, Work Preferences and Social Support on the Emotional Wellbeing of Women as Mothers with Young Children

Shifting focus from the variables related to the work status of mothers with young children, the second part of this study investigates how current work status, work preferences and social support impact the emotional experience associated with this life stage.

**Work status preferences of mothers with young children.** In addition to the hypotheses above, this current study further explores the qualitative reasons given by mothers for their return to work and how this relates to preferences for part-time or full-time employment.

The first study showed that mothers of young children had a strong preference for part-time work, and this sentiment is reflected in Australian statistics that show that the majority of mothers work part-time after the birth of their child, with 82% of the jobs mothers return to after childbirth being of a part-time nature.

**Table 5.1: Women who worked in a job after birth, employment details of first main job after birth – ABS Pregnancy and Employment Transitions, Australia (ABS, 2011)**

Usual weekly hours worked	One child in family	More than one child in family	Total
<b>Worked full-time</b>			
40 hours or more	12%	8%	10%
35–39 hours	7%	8%	8%
All who worked full-time	20%	17%	18%
<b>Worked part-time</b>			
25–34 hours	9%	13%	11%
16–24 hours	31%	22%	26%
15 hours or less	40%	48%	45%
All who worked part-time	80%	83%	82%

*Research Question: What is the preferred work status of women with young children and what reasons do they give for their current work status?*

**Work life conflict and stress.** Stress is considered one of the many contributing factors of gender imbalance for women in senior roles, with women being three times more likely than men to opt out of careers with highly stressful components (Coffman & Hagey, 2010). This is most likely to happen at the age where managers begin to take on more senior roles, potentially affecting the career progression of women.

However, high workloads alone cannot be attributed to this association. The interaction between family life, job demands and job control on work-life conflict have been shown to be significant (Gronlund, 2007). High levels of job demands negatively affect a person's home life; however, longer hours do not equate directly to higher work-life conflict, as high job control can actually reduce this reported conflict. Hill and colleagues (2008) were able to demonstrate that flexible work arrangements are linked to less stress, burnout and work-family conflict, illustrating the positive impact of control on psychological wellbeing. Gronlund (2007) highlighted the important observation that demands that affect an individual's level of strain can come from the home as well as work, due to competing commitments. Based on this, it may be assumed that multiple roles engaged in by mothers who work both domestically and professionally have the potential to create stressful conflict.

The challenge of balancing the competing priorities of work and primary caring responsibilities are reflected in the findings that employed mothers report higher time pressure than fathers and women not in the workforce (Craig & Sawrikar, 2009). Data suggest that this stress is linked to the domestic and caring demands of young children, as the 2010 HILDA report (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011) showed that as the age of the youngest child increases, parenting stress decreases.

The 2011 HILDA survey (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011) found support for work-family stress is persistently more common in mothers who work full-time, with 11% reporting high stress, as compared to 5% of those who work part-time.

While these figures suggest that high workloads and stress are related, Chapter Two, reported the higher proportion of women in part-time work and higher domestic workloads as compared to men. What is not clear is whether psychological wellbeing (depression, anxiety and stress) is related to work status within the demographic of mothers with young children.

*Hypothesis 3: Mothers of young children who work full-time will have lower psychological wellbeing scores than those who work part-time, or who are full-time homemakers.*

The assumption of work-life conflict for mothers has implications for gender equality in the workforce. For example, because women were perceived to be the primary carers at home, research shows that managers assumed that female employees would experience conflict between life and work more often than men (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2014). It was concluded that because of this perception, women were less likely to be nominated for promotion after becoming mothers.

Despite a woman's preference for returning to work many factors can prevent her from achieving a preferred employment status, including: availability of flexible work options, her partner's views on gender roles, financial barriers (James, 2008), and discrimination experienced during pregnancy (AHRC, 2014). There is evidence to show that having a match between a personal preference for certain tasks and the job tasks a person actually performs is related to various health and wellbeing factors



(Shaw & Gupta, 2004). Retirement literature shows that a match between actual and preferred work participation is positively associated with physical and psychological wellbeing (Herzog, House, & Morgan, 1991). In this context, having a match between actual and preferred work status is also predicted to be associated with positive psychological wellbeing for mothers of young children.

*Hypothesis 4: A mismatch between actual and preferred work status moderates the relationship between work status and psychological wellbeing.*

**Social support.** In the first study, mothers of young children expressed how important social support was in their experience of motherhood. Karasek's Job-Demands-Control model explains that the demands of a role, combined with the control an individual has to influence the way the role is fulfilled predicts the strain an individual will experience: highly demanding roles with low levels of control result in stress, whereas high demand and high control roles can be active and stimulating (Karasek, 1979). In this context, social support has been shown to be just as important as control over tasks, as it is a moderating factor that mitigates against job strain (Sargent & Terry, 2000).

The perception of autonomy and control in domestic spheres may come from the social support available to an individual, as well as the quality of this support. The negative relationship between social support and stress has been long established (Dignam & West, 1998). Research by Ertel, Koenen and Berkman (2008) concluded that social support moderates job strain and that this is particularly important for people with children.

The relationship between stress and the work status of mothers of young children remains unclear. Based on the literature, it is plausible that mothers of young children who have strong social support will have more positive psychological wellbeing, particularly those who are employed. In addition, previous research shows

the importance of perceptions of control in the stress experience, indicating that satisfaction with the quality of their social support network will be more impactful than the sheer size of a mother's support network.

*Hypothesis 5: The size of a mothers social support network and satisfaction with social support will be positively related to psychological wellbeing.*

## Method

**Participants.** The subjects in this study are 1185 mothers with children under the age of five years.

The distribution of work status in this sample was quite different from the overall Australian population, but reflects the trend of the majority of working mothers with children under five working part-time. Table 5.2 illustrates how the participants in this sample (i.e., mothers of young children) have very different employment patterns than women in general (which include mothers) and men. These alternative employment arrangements reflect the life stage that this sample are in, indicating that part-time work or being a full-time homemaker is far more common in this demographic than a full-time work status.

**Table 5.2: Participant statistics || Work status summary and population comparison || W&BII**

	Part-time 1–34 hours per week	Full-time 35+ hours per week	Not in paid work
Mothers (in this sample)	46.7%	13.4%	39.9%
Australian women*	25.7%	29.9%	44.5%
Australian men*	11.0%	56.7%	31.2%

\*Source: Labour force status of Australians, August 2011 (ABS, 2011)

The majority of this sample (96.2%) indicated that they were either married or in a de facto relationship (see Table 5.3). This is considerably higher than the 83.5% of families in Australia who are classified as ‘coupled’ (ABS, 2011b). This is not surprising, given that the sample is of mothers who have children under five years, and therefore a sub-sample of families in general.

**Table 5.3: Participant statistics || Marital status || W&BII**

Marital status		N	Valid %
<b>Partnered</b>	Married	1016	85.7
	De facto	124	10.5
<b>Single</b>		<b>45</b>	<b>3.8</b>
	In a relationship but not married or living together	8	0.7
	Single	14	1.2
	Separated	18	1.5
	Divorced	3	0.3
	Widowed	2	0.2

As shown in Table 5.4, the majority of women in this sample (87.2%) had one or two children, consistent with the Australian fertility rate of 1.9 children per woman (ABS, 2010).

**Table 5.4: Participant statistics || Number of children in each family || W&BII**

Family size	N	%
One child	495	41.7
Two children	539	45.5
Three children	127	10.7
Four + children	24	2.0

Participants were recruited in a variety of ways:

- Playgroup Australia included a link to the survey in an electronic newsletter sent to all members.
- Emails were sent to all contacts of the researcher asking for them to pass it on.
- Posters were placed in libraries, early childhood health centres, baby change rooms at shopping centres and playgrounds around Sydney.
- A database of daycare centres and preschools in Australia was collated. These centres were asked to let the parents of their centre know about the survey. Some requested posters and others used the prescribed text to include in newsletters.

As shown in Table 5.5, the average age of participants was 34 years (SD = 4.3; with a range of 20 to 49 years). The median full-time salary range was \$57,000 to \$80,000, reflecting the average weekly earnings of Australian females (ABS, 2011a).

**Table 5.5: Participant statistics || Summary || W&B II**

Sample size	N=1185
Mean age	34
Age range	20 to 49 years
Median salary range	\$57,000 to \$80,000
Living in Australia	97.3%
Mean age of youngest child	1.67 years

**Table 5.6: Participant statistics || Usual salary || W&B II**

Salary range (full-time equivalent)	Valid %
\$0	5%
\$1,000–\$6,000	1.9%
\$6,000–\$20,000	2.5%
\$20,000–\$34,000	4.2%
\$34,000–\$57,000	22.7%
\$57,000–\$80,000	32.8%
\$80,000–\$100,000	19.8%
\$100,000–\$180,000	13.3%
\$180,000+	2.2%

Work status is described in Table 5.7. Of the participants, 60% reported being in paid employment (either part-time or full-time), 16% were currently on parental leave, and 24% were not currently employed.

**Table 5.7: Participant statistics || Work status groups || W&B II**

How many hours do you now work outside the home per week?	Frequency (n)	Per cent	Cumulative per-cent
Full-time (35+hours)	159	13.4	13.4
Part-time (1–24 hours)	553	46.7	60.1
Currently on maternity leave	189	15.9	76.0
Full-time homemaker	243	20.5	96.5
Not employed student	41	3.5	

Due to a small sample size of students, this group was removed from the sample, bringing the total number in the sample analysed to n = 1144.

**Measures.** The Work and Babies survey was administered online. A full list of survey items are included in Appendix E. Following is a list of the measures that were included.

**Push and pull factors related to the work status of mothers of young children.** *Salary.* All subjects were asked 'What is your full-time (or equivalent) salary range in this role?' Based on nine salary bands (\$0; \$1–\$6,000; \$6,001–\$20,000; \$20,001–\$34,000; \$34,001–\$57,000; \$57,001–\$80,000; \$80,001–\$100,000; \$100,001–\$180,000; \$180,000+)

*Perceived job skill level.* This was measured by the Shaw and Gupta Job Complexity Assessment (Shaw & Gupta, 2004), which refers to an individual's perception of the skills required and complexity of their professional roles. This scale consists of three items rated on a five-point Likert scale reflecting levels of agreement. These questions were 'My job is very complex', 'My job requires a lot of skill', and 'My job is such that it takes a long time to learn the skills required to do the job well' ( $\alpha = 0.872$ ).

*Tenure.* Subjects were asked 'How long have you been with your most recent employer?' (Less than 1 year; 1–2 years; 2–3 years; 3–5 years; 5–7 years; 7–10 years; 10–15 years; 15+ years).

*Organisation size.* Measured by the question 'Approximately how many staff work in the organisation?' with three options representing small, medium and large organisation size in Australia (Up to 19; 20 to 99; 100+).

*Experience of motherhood.* This is defined as the level of coping and emotional wellbeing associated with the experience of motherhood in women with small children (Astbury, 1994). This is measured by the Experience of Motherhood Questionnaire (EMQ) (Astbury, 1994). This scale consists of 20 items, using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 4 (very much so), measuring the

positive, enjoyable aspects of parenthood, such as ‘I have greater confidence since I became a mother’ (negatively scored) and negative or stressful aspects, such as ‘I feel cut off from my friends’. A high score on the EMQ indicates high amounts of stress, dissatisfaction and difficulties coping with the task of parenting ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ).

*Intention to return after maternity leave.* For the sub-sample of subjects who indicated that they were currently on maternity leave, they were asked “will you go back to your job when your maternity leave ends?” Table 5.9 below shows that 64% of this sample reported that they intended to return to their previous roles at the end of their maternity leave. Nearly a quarter of mothers (24%) were not sure and 12% said no.

**Table 5.9: Intentions of those on maternity leave || W&BII**

Will you go back to your old job when your maternity leave ends?	N	% of total
Group 1: Yes	118	64%
Group 2: No	22	12%
Group 3: Maybe	44	24%
TOTAL	184	

*Organisational commitment.* Organisational commitment is based on Allen and Meyer’s Three-Component Model (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In this model, three distinct forms of organisational commitment are identified: affective, continuance and normative commitment. These three constructs are measured by the Affective Commitment Scale, Continuance Commitment Scale, and Normative Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

- a) Affective commitment – the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organisation. For example ‘This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to me’. This subscale consisted of eight items (standard version  $\alpha = 0.85$ ; not employed version  $\alpha = 0.83$ ).
- b) Continuance commitment – commitment based on the costs that employees associate with leaving the organisation. For example ‘Too much in my life

would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now'. This subscale consisted of eight items (standard version  $\alpha = 0.79$ ; not employed version  $\alpha = 0.72$ ).

- c) Normative commitment – feelings of obligation to remain with the organisation. For example, 'I think that people these days move from company to company too often'. This subscale consisted of eight items (standard version  $\alpha = 0.78$ ; not employed version  $\alpha = 0.81$ ).

*Reasons for current work status.* In the first qualitative study, the participants listed all of the reasons they consider for returning or not returning to work. These lists were collated to create a checklist of options.



**Table 5.8: Survey items for returning to work or not returning to work || W&BII**

Part-time or full-time employed:	Full-time homemaker:
Why did you return to work?	Why have you not returned to work?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My maternity leave term ended</li> <li>• I had work pressures and responsibilities to attend to</li> <li>• I could lose my job</li> <li>• Childcare options became available</li> <li>• My partner is the primary carer</li> <li>• My boss wanted me back ASAP</li> <li>• Pressure on family income</li> <li>• To maintain financial independence</li> <li>• Because I said I would</li> <li>• I miss the action of work</li> <li>• To progress my career</li> <li>• I don't want to lose what I have worked so hard to achieve</li> <li>• Staying at home full-time is not for me</li> <li>• I felt ready to go back to work</li> <li>• I crave companionship that is adult and child free</li> <li>• I think my child is better off with me working</li> <li>• My child reached a stage where they were happy to be in care so I went back to work</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having children makes working too difficult</li> <li>• Being at home right now is more important than a job</li> <li>• I couldn't handle the demands of my job on top of the demands of motherhood</li> <li>• I want to/or have had another baby</li> <li>• I don't want my child to be in daycare until they are more independent</li> <li>• I haven't been able to find suitable work</li> <li>• I am currently or planning to study</li> <li>• My partner would prefer me to be at home</li> <li>• I believe a mother's role is in the home</li> <li>• I can't expect my colleagues to work long hours while I run out the door on time everyday</li> <li>• The industry I work in is not suitable for working mums</li> <li>• I'm considering a career change</li> <li>• I've decided to work for myself</li> <li>• I don't want to miss out on watching my children grow up</li> <li>• The cost of childcare makes going to work pointless</li> <li>• I don't think I would be capable of working the same way I used to</li> <li>• We prepared ourselves financially so that I don't have to rush back to work</li> <li>• I'm having too much fun</li> <li>• I am on maternity leave right now</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>

*Psychological wellbeing.* Measured by the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). The short version of the DASS was used (DASS21), consisting of 21 items ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ). The DASS consists of three self-report

subscales that measure the negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. Subjects indicate on a four-point scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (almost always) the extent to which they have experienced each state over the past week.

Each subscale of the DASS21 has seven items and show good reliability:

- a) The depression subscale measures states such as hopelessness, self-depreciation, lack of interest or involvement, and dysphoria:  $\alpha = 0.87$  (e.g., 'I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all');
- b) The anxiety subscale assesses the subjective experience of anxious emotion and the physical and autonomic arousal symptoms of anxiety:  $\alpha = 0.75$  (e.g., 'I felt I was close to panic');
- c) The stress subscale measures non-specific arousal, such as being easily upset, irritable, over-reaction and impatient:  $\alpha = 0.86$  (e.g., 'I found it difficult to relax').

*Work status and preference match:* Subjects who indicated their work status as employed (full-time or part-time) were asked to indicate their preference to: a) not work outside the home at all; b) work less hours if I could; c) work more hours if I could; or d) I have the right balance.

Subjects who indicated their work status as full-time homemakers (not employed) were asked to indicate their preference to: a) just work and have no childrearing responsibilities; b) work full-time if I could; c) work some hours if I could; or d) not work outside the home at all. These responses were coded as either a match or mismatch between actual and preferred work status.

Table 5.10 below summarises the work preference matches of employed and non-employed mothers in this sample.

**Table 5.10: Actual and preferred work status match || W&BII**

	Group	n	%	Survey item	n	%
Employed	Mismatch	379	53.6	To not work outside the home at all	50	7.1
				To work less hours if I could	285	40.3
				To work more if I could	44	6.2
	Match	328	46.4	I have just the right balance	328	46.4
Not Employed	Mismatch	167	57.8	To just work and not have any child rearing responsibilities	3	0.7
				To work full-time if I could	5	1.7
				To work some hours if I could	159	55.4
	Match	121	42.2	To not work outside the home at all	121	42.2

*Social support.* Measured by the Social Support Questionnaire (Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). Subjects are asked to list people who provide them with help and support, as well as rate how satisfied they are with the support. There are two subscales:

- a) Amount of social support. This subscale consisted of six items, such as ‘Who can you really count on to be dependable when you need help?’ and ‘Who really accepts you totally, including your worst and best points?’. Up to nine people could be listed for each item, converted into a score ranging from 0 to 9 ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ).
- b) Satisfaction with available social support. The question ‘How satisfied are you with this support?’ was asked after each of the social support items ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ).

## Results

*Hypothesis 1: The positive experience of motherhood pulls women away from paid work, and role factors (salary, skill level, tenure, and organisation size) push them towards it - engagement in paid work will be negatively related to the positive experience of motherhood and positively related to role factors of salary, perceived skill level, role tenure, and organisation size.*

Table 5.11 presents the descriptive statistics for each group (not employed, part-time employment, and full-time employment). Multinomial Regression Analysis was conducted to predict the work status outcomes (full-time, part-time or not employed). Those currently on maternity leave were removed from the sample.

**Table 5.11: Means and SD for variables and groups in hypothesis 1 || W&B II**

	<b>EMQ (a)</b>	<b>Salary (b)</b>	<b>Skill level (c)</b>	<b>Tenure (d)</b>	<b>Org Size (e)</b>
<b>Not employed (valid n = 192)</b>					
Mean	50.38	5.75	3.69	3.58	2.26
SD	8.19	1.43	0.86	1.85	0.84
<b>Part-time employed (valid n = 509)</b>					
Mean	50.90	5.92	3.83	3.94	2.31
SD	7.78	1.47	0.89	2.01	0.86
<b>Full-time employed (valid n = 148)</b>					
Mean	50.35	6.67	4.07	4.41	2.58
SD	7.95	1.24	0.78	2.05	0.71

(a) EMQ min score = 31; max score = 77. High score indicates high amounts of stress, dissatisfaction and difficulties coping with the task of parenting

(b) Salary range: scale from 1 (\$0) to 9 (\$180,000+)

(c) Average Perceived Role Skill Level: scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high)

(d) Tenure scale: 1 = <1year; 2 = 1–2 years; 3 = 2–3 years; 4 = 3–5 years; 5 = 5–7 years; 6 = 7–10 years; 7 = 10–15 years; 8 = 15+ years

(e) Org size range from 1 to 3: 1 = up to 19 employees (small); 2 = 20 to 99 employees (medium); 3 = 100+ employees (large)

**Table 5.12: Multinomial regression for predicating work status || W&B II**

	<b>b (SE)</b>	<b>Odds ratio</b>	<b>95% CI for odds ratio</b>
<b>Full-time vs. not employed</b>			
Intercept	4.48 (1.03)**		
EMQ	0.00 (0.02)	1.00	0.97–1.03
Salary	-0.34 (0.10)**	0.71	0.59–0.86
Skill level	-0.23 (0.14)	0.79	0.60–1.05
Tenure	-0.08 (0.06)	0.92	0.82–1.04
Org size	-0.32 (0.15)*	0.73	0.54–0.98
<b>Full-time vs. part-time</b>			
Intercept	3.90 (0.90)**		
EMQ	0.01 (0.01)	1.01	0.98–1.03
Salary	-0.30 (0.08)**	0.74	0.63–0.87
Skill level	-0.08 (0.13)	0.92	0.72–1.18
Tenure	-0.02 (0.02)	0.98	0.88–1.08
Org size	-0.30 (0.14)*	0.74	0.57–0.96
<b>Not employed vs. part-time</b>			
Intercept	-0.53 (0.72)		
EMQ	0.01 (0.01)	1.01	0.99–1.03
Salary	0.04 (0.07)	1.04	0.91–1.19
Skill level	0.15 (0.10)	1.26	0.95–1.42
Tenure	0.06 (0.05)	1.06	0.97–1.16
Org size	0.02 (0.11)	1.02	0.83–1.26

Note  $R^2 = 0.06$  (Cox & Snell),  $0.07$  (Nagelkerke), Model  $\chi^2(10) = 50.18$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

The analysis shows that salary and organisational size have significant main effect on full-time work status vs. both part-time and not employed, but not on part-time work status vs. not employed. Specifically, higher salary and working for larger organisations predicated mothers returning to work full-time over part-time or not

working. The odds ratio shows that the odds of a mother of young children working full-time (as compared to not being employed) are 0.71 as salary increases by one unit and 0.73 for every unit increase in organisation size. Similarly, when looking at full-time compared to part-time, the odds of a mother working full-time are 0.74 as salary or organisation size increase by one unit.

The experience of motherhood, tenure and perceived skill level were not significant predictors of work status. None of these variables significantly predicted returning to work part-time or not at all.

*Hypothesis 2: For the subset on maternity leave, intention to return after maternity leave is positively related to organisational commitment.*

Multinomial Regression Analysis was conducted to test if organisational commitment predicts the intentions to return to work at the end of maternity leave (yes, no or maybe).

**Table 5.17: Intentions of those on maternity leave || W&BII**

Will you go back to your old job when your maternity leave ends?	n	% of total
Yes	120	63%
No	22	12%
Maybe	47	25%
TOTAL	189	

**Table 5.18: Mean and SD of org commitment for maternity leave sample || W&BII || Scale of 1 to 7**

	Affective		Continuance		Normative	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Yes (n = 107)	5.54	1.08	4.21	1.18	3.43	0.92
No (n = 20)	4.33	1.30	3.81	0.79	3.36	0.81
Maybe (n = 44)	3.90	1.17	3.85	0.96	3.17	0.95

**Table 5.19: Multinomial regression for predicating intention to return after maternity leave ends || W&B II**

	<b>b (SE)</b>	<b>Odds ratio</b>	<b>95% CI for odds ratio</b>
<b>No vs. yes</b>			
Intercept	-0.27 (1.41)		
Continuance	0.34 (0.15)	1.34	0.89–2.21
Normative	-0.04 (0.29)	0.96	0.55–1.68
Affective	-0.17 (0.24)	1.18	0.75–1.88
<b>No vs. maybe</b>			
Intercept	2.12 (1.50)		
Continuance	0.05 (0.26)	0.84	1.06–1.75
Normative	-0.08 (0.31)	0.92	0.50–1.71
Affective	-0.31 (0.26)	0.74	0.44–1.22
<b>Yes vs. maybe</b>			
Intercept	2.39 (1.05)*		
Continuance	-0.28 (0.18)	0.75	0.54–1.07
Normative	-0.04 (0.22)	0.96	0.63–1.47
Affective	-0.48 (0.18)**	0.62	0.44–0.89

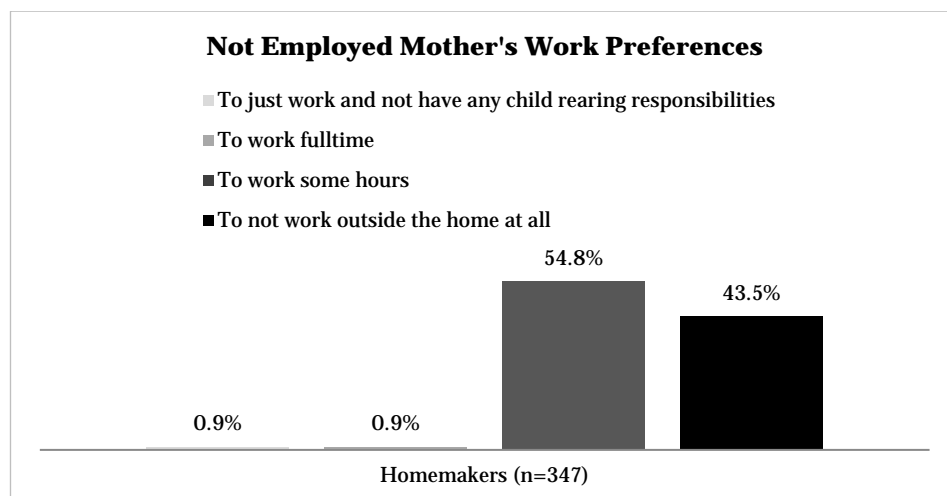
Note  $R^2 = 0.08$  (Cox & Snell), 0.09 (Nagelkerke), Model  $\chi^2(6) = 13.80$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

Affective commitment (emotional) significantly predicted a mother's positive intention to return to work after maternity leave ends, as compared to being unsure. The odds ratio shows that as affective commitment raises one unit, the odds of a mother saying she intends to return to work (as compared to being unsure) are 0.44. Neither normative or continuance commitment predicted the outcome of not intending to return to work when maternity leave ends, as compared to saying yes or maybe.

To better understand the drivers for women's engagement with paid work after they have a child, this research surveyed subject's work preferences and reasons for their current work status.

**Return to work preferences.** Figure 5.2 below summarises the work preferences of subjects in this study who were not currently employed. Full-time is not a work preference for mothers who identify as full-time homemakers, with less than 1% saying this would be preferable. Reflecting the findings of the first Work and Babies study, 44% of the full-time homemakers reported they have their preferred work status (i.e., to not be employed). Despite this, over half of those surveyed who identify as full-time homemakers (55%) report that they would like to be working some hours if they could.

Figure 5.2: When it comes to balancing work and motherhood right now, please indicate you preference: not employed mothers

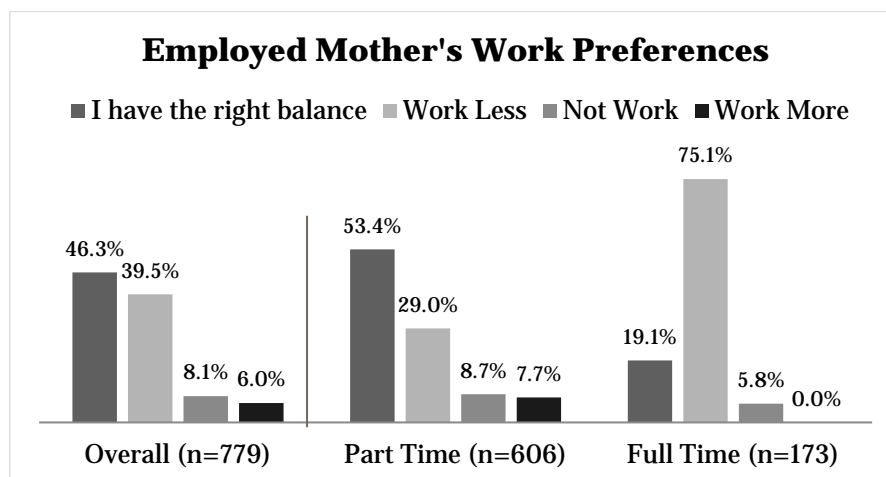


As shown in Figure 5.3 below, nearly half (46%) of currently employed mothers with children under five years report that they have the right balance between work and motherhood. It is more common for employed mothers to report they would like to work fewer hours (40%) than more (6%). Of those employed part-time more than half of this group (53%) report they have the right balance, as compared to 19% of the full-time employed. Three quarters of full-time employed mothers say they would



prefer to work less hours, in contrast to 29% of part-time employed mothers. Only 8% of employed mothers would prefer to not work at all.

Figure 5.3: When it comes to balancing work and motherhood right now, please indicate your preference: employed mothers



**Reasons for current work status.** Table 5.13 summarises the reasons that mothers in paid employment gave for returning to work. The most common reason was financial, with 59% of this sample reporting pressure on family income as a reason to return to work. Nonetheless, 41% did not cite financial incentive as a reason to return.

Nearly half of this sample (43%) indicated that they miss the action of work and 39% say that they do not want to lose what they had worked so hard to achieve at work and that being at home full-time is not for them. This indicates that there is a level of personal fulfilment, enjoyment and career focus that gets women back to work after children. Potential negative consequences, such as losing their job or because their boss wanted them back, were endorsed infrequently (6% and 10% respectively). Even fewer (5%) were returning to work because their partner was the primary carer of their children.

**Table 5.13: Reasons for returning to work – employed mothers sample || W&BII**

Reasons for returning to work	n	% of employed sample
Pressure on family income	467	59%
I miss the action of work	338	43%
I don't want to lose what I have worked so hard to achieve	304	39%
Staying at home full-time is not for me	303	39%
To maintain financial independence	301	38%
I felt ready to go back to work	287	36%
My maternity leave term ended	270	34%
I crave companionship that is adult and child free	239	30%
To progress my career	218	28%
Because I said I would	181	23%
Childcare options became available	139	18%
I had work pressures and responsibilities to attend to	123	16%
I think my child is better off with me working	116	15%
Other	96	12%
My child reached a stage where they were happy to be in care so	84	11%
I went back to work		
My boss wanted me back ASAP	78	10%
I could lose my job	45	6%
My partner is the primary carer	38	5%

Table 5.14 splits the employed sample into two groups: full-time and part-time employed. When looking at the two groups, there are few differences in their reasons for returning to work. It seems that full-time work is linked more closely with career progression, with progressing their career being second most highly rated (44%) after income. Returning to work because you miss the action is rated as the second most common reason for part-time and fourth for full-time employees, but with similar proportions.

Both groups indicated that being at home full-time is not desirable and they place an importance of not losing what they had worked hard to achieve in their professional roles. This finding is reflective of the focus group results, where the employed mothers group were reluctant to say they went back to work for money,

that they went back to work to keep their careers moving and maintain what they had already established in their professional lives.

**Table 5.14: Top five reasons for returning to work || W&BII**

Reasons for returning to work	n	% of full-time sample	Reasons for returning to work	n	% of part-time sample
Pressure on family income	118	68%	Pressure on family income	349	57%
To progress my career	76	44%	I miss the action of work	265	43%
Staying at home full-time is not for me	75	43%	I felt ready to go back to work	235	38%
I miss the action of work	73	42%	I don't want to lose what I have worked so hard to achieve	232	38%
I don't want to lose what I have worked so hard to achieve	72	42%	To maintain financial independence	230	37%

*Not employed mothers.* Table 5.15 below outlines the results for the selected reasons for mothers not returning to work after childbirth. For mothers who have not returned to work, there is an emphasis on the importance of fulfilling their motherhood role over that of their professional role, with 77% of this sample saying that being at home is more important than a job.

More than half (68%) report that they do not want to miss out on watching their children grow up. Statements that reflect the social role of motherhood as the primary carer above all else, such as “my partner would prefer me to be at home” and “I believe a mother’s role in the home” are reported by about one in five of the women who are not in paid employment. In contrast, planning to study, starting their own business or not being able to find suitable work is reported by less than 10% of these mothers.

**Table 5.15: Reasons for not working – full-time homemaker sample || W&BII**

<b>Reasons for not working</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>% of not employed sample</b>
Being at home right now is more important than a job	269	77%
I don't want to miss out on watching my children grow up	239	68%
I don't want my child to be in daycare until they are more independent	195	56%
I want to/or have had another baby	139	40%
We prepared ourselves financially so that I don't have to rush back to work	129	37%
I couldn't handle the demands of my job on top of the demands of motherhood	123	35%
The cost of childcare makes going to work pointless	122	35%
Having children makes working too difficult	118	34%
I'm having too much fun	105	30%
I don't think I would be capable of working the same way I used to	104	30%
I am on maternity leave right now	93	27%
My partner would prefer me to be at home	79	23%
I believe a mother's role is in the home	69	20%
I'm considering a career change	60	17%
The industry I work in is not suitable for working mums	58	17%
I am currently (or planning to) study	35	10%
Other	31	9%
I've decided to work for myself	29	8%
I haven't been able to find suitable work	28	8%
I can't expect my colleagues to work long hours while I run out the door on time everyday	25	7%

### **Emotional experience and work status of women as mothers of young children.**

*Hypothesis 3: Mothers who work full-time will have lower psychological wellbeing scores than those who work part-time or not employed.*

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted. Using Pillai's trace, there was a significant effect of psychological wellbeing, based on return to work status ( $V = 0.02$ ,  $F_{(6, 1778)} = 3.5$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Separate univariate ANOVAs on return to work status showed no significant differences in depression ( $F_{(2,890)} = 1.76$ ,  $p = 0.17$ ). Significant group differences were found for anxiety ( $F_{(2,890)} = 5.96$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), and stress ( $F_{(2,890)} = 5.97$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

**Table 5.16: Means & SD || Hypothesis 3 || W&B II**

	<b>Depression</b>	<b>Anxiety</b>	<b>Stress</b>
<b>Not working</b> (valid n = 220)			
Mean	9.44	8.10	11.77
SD	3.01	1.76	3.79
<b>Part-time employed</b> (valid n = 518)			
Mean	9.47	8.65	12.35
SD	3.10	2.57	4.07
<b>Full-time employed</b> (valid n = 155)			
Mean	10.00	8.92	13.25
SD	4.12	2.83	4.41

When conducting an ANOVA for each of these three variables, Levine's Test of Homogeneity of Variances is significant for all, indicating that the variances are significantly different. Because of this violation of homogeneity, the Welch and Brown-Forsythe adjusted F-ratios are used, indicating similar results to the MANOVA. Depression shows no significant differences (Welch  $F_{(2, 339)} = 1.21$ ,  $p = 0.30$ ); Brown-Forsythe  $F_{(2, 408)} = 1.52$ ,  $p = 0.22$ ). Anxiety showed significant group differences ( $F_{(2, 371)} = 8.08$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ; Brown-Forsythe  $F_{(2, 424)} = 6.07$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Stress showed significant group differences ( $F_{(2, 358)} = 5.71$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ; Brown-Forsythe  $F_{(2, 497)} = 5.83$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

Planned group contrast revealed that not employed mothers report lower anxiety than those part-time ( $t_{(588)} = 3.37$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ); or full-time ( $t_{(237)} = 3.20$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). No differences in anxiety were found between full-time and part-time employed mothers.

With stress, planned contrasts showed that full-time employed mothers report higher scores than those working part-time ( $t_{(238)} = 2.27$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ), or not at all ( $t_{(299)}$

= 3.37,  $p = 0.00$ ). No differences in stress were found between part-time employed mothers and those not employed.

*Hypothesis 4: A mismatch between actual and preferred work status moderates the relationship between work status and wellbeing*

The work preferences for mothers in the study have been explored earlier, as shown by Figures 5.2 and 5.3.

A two way factorial ANOVA was conducted to analyse the main effects and interaction between the actual work status and preferred work status on the depression, anxiety and stress score of mothers with young children. Table 5.17 shows how these match/mismatch groups were determined.

<b>Table 5.17: Actual and preferred work status match    W&amp;BII</b>						
	Group	n	%	Survey item	n	%
Employed	Mismatch	379	53.6	To not work outside the home at all	50	7.1
				To work less hours if I could	285	40.3
				To work more if I could	44	6.2
	Match	328	46.4	I have just the right balance	328	46.4
Not employed	Mismatch	167	57.8	To just work and not have any child rearing responsibilities	3	0.7
				To work full-time if I could	5	1.7
				To work some hours if I could	159	55.4
	Match	121	42.2	To not work outside the home at all	121	42.2

**Depression.** Results show a significant main effect for work preference match ( $F_{(1,886)} = 22.4$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that in this sample of mothers with young children, having a match between actual and preferred work status was related to lower depression scores ( $M = 8.76$ ,  $SD = 0.23$ ), as compared to those who have a mismatch ( $M = 10.08$ ,  $SD = 0.15$ ), irrespective of current work status. As shown in the analysis of hypothesis three, there was a non-significant main effect of work

status on the depression scores of mothers with young children ( $F_{(1,886)} = 0.16$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

The interaction effect between work status and work preference on depression was not significant ( $F_{(2,886)} = 1.62$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the effect of having a mismatch between actual and preferred work status on depression did not differ across full-time, part-time or not employed mothers.

**Table 5.18: Depression mean and SD, based on work status and work preference match || W&BII**

		Mean	SD
<b>Full-time</b>	Match	8.29	0.59
	Mismatch	10.44	0.29
<b>Part-time</b>	Match	9.06	0.19
	Mismatch	9.95	0.21
<b>Homemaker</b>	Match	8.92	0.33
	Mismatch	9.84	0.29

**Anxiety.** Results show a significant main effect for work preference match ( $F_{(1,886)} = 27.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that in this sample of mothers with young children, having a match between actual and preferred work status was related to lower anxiety scores ( $M = 7.98$ ,  $SD = 0.17$ ), as compared to those who have a mismatch ( $M = 8.80$ ,  $SD = 0.12$ ), irrespective of current work status. Reflecting the results of hypothesis three, the main effect of anxiety for work status was also significant ( $F_{(1,886)} = 4.6$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

The two way factorial ANOVA for anxiety indicates a significant interaction between work status and work preference match on reported anxiety levels ( $F_{(2,886)} = 3.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This effect shows that those who are employed full-time, part-time or not employed are impacted differently by having a match or mismatch with their work preferences. Specifically, anxiety scores were similar in those who are employed

part-time or not employed, whether they had a match or mismatch with their work preferences. However, anxiety scores for mothers who work full-time and have a match with their work preference were significantly lower than those who work full-time and have a mismatch. As shown in Table 5.19, those who work full-time and have a mismatch with their preferred work status indicate they wish to work fewer hours, revealing that mothers who work full-time and wish to work less have higher levels of anxiety than those who feel they have the right balance.

**Table 5.19: Anxiety mean and SD, based on work status and work preference match || W&BII**

<b>Anxiety</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Full-time</b>	Match	7.58	0.44
	Mismatch	9.27	0.22
<b>Part-time</b>	Match	8.47	0.15
	Mismatch	8.87	0.16
<b>Homemaker</b>	Match	7.89	0.25
	Mismatch	8.23	0.22

**Stress.** A significant main effect for work preference match ( $F_{(1,886)} = 16.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicates that in this sample of mothers with young children, having a match between actual and preferred work status was related to lower stress scores ( $M = 11.52$ ,  $SD = 0.29$ ), as compared to those who have a mismatch ( $M = 12.92$ ,  $SD = 0.19$ ), irrespective of current work status. The interaction effect between work status and work preference was not significant ( $F_{(2,886)} = 2.20$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the effect of having a mismatch between actual and preferred work status on stress did not differ across full-time, part-time or not employed mothers.

**Table 5.20: Stress mean and SD, based on work status and work preference match || W&BII**

		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Full-time</b>	Match	11.26	0.72



	Mismatch	13.77	0.36
<b>Part-time</b>	Match	11.79	0.24
	Mismatch	13.00	0.26
<b>Homemaker</b>	Match	11.51	0.41
	Mismatch	11.98	0.36

*Hypothesis 5: The size of a mother's social support network and satisfaction with support will be positively related to psychological wellbeing.*

The correlations between the size and satisfaction of a mother's social support network with depression, anxiety and stress was analysed with a linear regression model. This model first looked at the variance in depression, anxiety and stress scores accounted for by satisfaction with social support, then adding the variable of network size to the model.

**Table 5.21: Mean and SD of size of social support network and satisfaction with social support network || W&BII**

	Size of social support network	Satisfaction with social support network
Mean	3.46	5.13
SD	1.63	0.93

**Depression.** Consistent with the hypothesis, both the size and satisfaction with social support are significantly negatively correlated with depression (Size:  $r = -0.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Satisfaction:  $r = -0.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Satisfaction with social support alone accounts for 10% ( $p = 0.00$ ) of the variation in depression scores in this sample. Both satisfaction with and size of the social support network together increase this prediction to 10.7% ( $p = 0.01$ ).

As predicated, satisfaction with social support has a stronger negative relationship than the size. The regression model indicates that as satisfaction with social support increases by one unit, depression scores decrease by 1.03 points

( $p < 0.001$ ). As the number of people listed in the social support network increases by one, depression scores decrease by 0.17 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 5.22: Linear model of social support predictors of depression || W&BII**

<b>Depression</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Model 1</b>				
<b>Constant</b>	15.27 (14.11, 16.42)	.59		
<b>Satisfaction</b>	-1.12 (-1.34, -0.89)	.11	-.32	0.00
<b>Model 2</b>				
<b>Constant</b>	15.40 (14.24, 16.55)	.59		
<b>Satisfaction</b>	-1.03 (-1.26, -0.79)	-.12	-.29	0.00
<b>Size</b>	-.017 (-0.30, -0.04)	.07	-.09	0.011

**Note:**  $R^2 = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.00$  for model 1;  $R^2 = 0.11$ ,  $p = 0.01$  for Model 2

**Anxiety.** Consistent with the hypothesis, both the size and satisfaction with social support are significantly negatively correlated with anxiety (Size:  $r = -0.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Satisfaction:  $r = -0.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Satisfaction with social support alone accounts for 2.9% ( $p = 0.00$ ) of the variation in anxiety scores in this sample. Both satisfaction with and size of the social support network together increase this prediction to 3.3% ( $p = 0.05$ ).

As predicated, satisfaction with social support has a significant negative relationship to anxiety scores. The regression model indicated that as satisfaction with social support increases by one unit, anxiety scores decrease by 0.40 points ( $p < 0.001$ ). However, as the number of people listed in the social support network increases by one, anxiety scores decrease by 0.10 ( $p = 0.05$ , n.s.), but this is only bordering on significance.

**Table 5.27: Linear model of social support predictors of anxiety || W&B II**

<b>Anxiety</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b><math>\beta</math></b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Model 1</b>				
<b>Constant</b>	10.89 (9.97, 11.78)	.46		
<b>Satisfaction</b>	-0.45 (-0.62, -0.28)	.09	-.17	0.00
<b>Model 2</b>				
<b>Constant</b>	10.96 (10.05, 11.86)	.46		
<b>Satisfaction</b>	-0.40	-.09	-.15	0.00

	(-0.58, -0.21)			
<b>Size</b>	-0.10	.05	-.07	0.05
	(-0.21, 0)			

**Note:**  $R^2 = 0.029$ ,  $p = 0.00$  for model 1;  $R^2 = 0.033$ ,  $p = 0.05$  for Model 2

**Stress.** Consistent with the hypothesis, both the size and satisfaction with social support are significantly negatively correlated with stress scores in mothers of young children (Size:  $r = -0.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Satisfaction:  $r = -0.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Satisfaction with social support alone accounts for 6.1% ( $p = 0.00$ ) of the variation in stress scores in this sample. Both satisfaction with and size of the social support network together increase this prediction to 6.6% ( $p = 0.01$ ).

As predicated, satisfaction with social support has a significant negative relationship with stress scores. The regression model indicates that as satisfaction with social support increases by one unit, stress scores decrease by 0.98 points ( $p < 0.01$ ), and as the number of people listed in the social support network increases by one, stress scores decrease by 0.22 ( $p = 0.01$ ).

**Table 5.28: Linear model of social support predictors of stress || W&BII**

<b>Stress</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>SE B</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Model 1</b>				
<b>Constant</b>	17.99 (16.52, 19.47)	.75		
<b>Satisfaction</b>	-1.09 (-1.38, -0.81)	.14	-.25	0.00
<b>Model 2</b>				
<b>Constant</b>	18.16 (16.68, 19.63)	.75		
<b>Satisfaction</b>	-0.98 (-1.28, -0.67)	.15	-.22	0.00
<b>Size</b>	-0.22 (-0.38, -0.05)	.09	-.09	0.01

**Note:**  $R^2 = 0.061$ ,  $p = 0.00$  for model 1;  $R^2 = 0.066$ ,  $p = 0.01$  for Model 2

## **Discussion: Work and Babies Studies One and Two**

The results of the Work and Babies (W&BI) qualitative study and survey (W&BII) provide insight into the experiences of mothers of young children with various work statuses. One overall observation of this analysis is that there appears to be more similarities than differences between these groups.

The first hypothesis tested the push and pull factors related to the work status of mothers of young children. This analysis found that the experience of motherhood does not predict the work status of women in this sample, disconfirming the assumption that the emotional experience of motherhood influences whether a woman will return to work or not after childbirth. The push factors of skill level and role tenure were not significantly related to work status in this study. However, higher salary and larger organisations positively predicted the work status of full-time as compared to part-time or not employed. None of the factors tested predicted part-time employment over not employed.

Despite part-time employment being the overall preference for women in both studies, it seems that pay and organisation size are the two factors that predict return to work full-time. Combined with the qualitative data in W&BII that showed career progression as a top rated reason for women returning to work full-time, it appears that career factors are a key determining feature for the work status of mothers with young children. These findings support recommendations from the business and academic literature that call for increased access to part-time roles with career trajectories (O'Leary & Russell, 2012; Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010)

The second hypothesis that organisational commitment will predict the intention to return to work for the group of subjects currently on maternity leave was not supported. Organisation commitment did not predict a 'yes' or 'no' response when subjects were asked about their intention to return. One significant finding was

that affective organisational commitment was positively related to a mother's intention to return, as compared to being unsure. This indicates that the perceived costs of leaving the organisation or a sense of obligation are not factors related to a mother's intention to return to her role after maternity leave. However, the emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organisation is a predictor for women intending to return, as compared to those who are unsure if they will return.

To better understand the drivers for women's engagement with paid work after they have a child, this research surveyed subject's work preferences and reasons for their current work status. The qualitative study in Chapter Four found that these mothers of young children were motivated to return to work because they do not want to lose what they have worked hard to achieve in their careers. Career progression and family friendly work cultures (such as maternity leave, flexible work practices and the attitude of co-workers) were the things that many of the women in these focus groups reported as most important to them. These observations are supported by the survey data analysis. Of those in the sample that returned to work full-time, 44% cite career progression as a reason for returning to work—second after pressure on family income—which is much higher than the 23% of part-time employed mothers who report this as a reason.

In this larger survey sample, 59% of employed mothers of young children indicated that finances were a reason for them returning to work. However, this means that for 41%, income is not a factor in their return to work decision. This statistic indicates that it cannot be assumed that all women return to work for the financial incentives. This reflects the findings that after the costs of childcare and the pay penalties incurred as a result of a career break, the financial incentives for mothers returning to work are small (Cassells, Miranti, Nepal, & Tanton, 2009) and

that other incentives, such as enjoying their work or professional development, should be part of the narrative when understanding why women with young children return to work.

For the sample of mothers in the W&BII Survey who have not returned to work, these women reflect an emphasis on fulfilling their motherhood role as a priority over their professional roles. Three quarters of this sample report that a reason for them not working is that staying at home is more important than a job. Other statements that reflect this social role, such as not wanting to miss out on their children growing up, also rate quite highly. Despite over half (55%) of this group reporting that they would like to be working some hours, less than one in 10 (8%) report that they have been unable to find suitable work, or starting their own business. This reporting of motherhood as a priority over professional roles as a reason for not returning to work may seem like a contradiction to the findings of hypothesis one, which showed that experience of motherhood did not predict work status. With these two pieces of data together, it appears that the enjoyment or positive experience of motherhood is experienced by women no matter their work status, but cited by some as a reason to not engage in paid work.

It is possible that these reasons for returning to work or not are subject to responding with social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993), with people reporting inaccurately to present themselves in a positive way. Social roles expectations place a high value on the role of motherhood, as the high reporting of statements that are congruent with this role, such as placing a higher emphasis on non-monetary reasons for returning to work or doing the right thing by staying at home would reflect. Low levels of reporting on reasons that are not congruent with this archetypal role of the mother (such as the self-development activity of study or not being the primary carer) are also evident.

These findings reflect the competing commitments for some women: wishing to work and also be a good mother (Eagly, 1987; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glisk, 2004). It is assumed that mothers provide the physical care needed by their children (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004), making it difficult to fully engage in paid work while their children are young and domestic workload high. Women who change from being strongly committed to the labour market and switch their focus to the family by staying at home or reducing their work hours explain that this shift was due to the unexplained emotional transformation that occurred when their child was born (James, 2008). Others explain that as a strategy to reconcile this desire to fulfil both work and caring roles, Australian women often work part-time or casually (The Work and Family Policy Roundtable, 2013). This process plays a large role in the cause of the gender pay gap in Australia, as reducing hours in paid employment is a solution that will solve the immediate challenge of balancing work and life commitments, especially when there are young children in the home and the domestic demand for women is at its peak. This compromise does come at a cost however, as flexible and part-time roles are associated with career penalties (see Appendix B).

Switching direction slightly to investigate the experience of women in this life-stage, the third hypothesis predicted that mothers in this study employed full time would have lower psychological wellbeing scores than mothers who were employed part-time or not at all. This hypothesis was partially supported, with some mixed results. First, there were no group differences on depression scores between the three groups. However, as compared to mothers who are not employed, those working full-time report higher anxiety and stress scores, and they had high stress scores compared to part-time employed mothers. Those working part-time reported higher anxiety scores than homemakers.



Hypothesis 4 predicted that, more than actual work status, it would be a mismatch between actual and preferred work status that affected psychological wellbeing of mothers. Results indicated that in this sample of mothers with young children, having a match between actual and preferred work status was related to lower depression, anxiety and stress, as compared to those who have a mismatch, irrespective of current work status. The interaction effects between work status and work preference on depression and on stress were not significant, indicating that the effect of having a mismatch between actual and preferred work status did not differ across full-time, part-time or not employed mothers. In contrast, there was a significant interaction between work status and work preference match on reported anxiety levels, whereby a match or mismatch did not affect the anxiety of those who are employed part-time or not employed, but it did make a difference for full-time workers. Among the full-time workers, mothers who wish to work less had higher levels of anxiety than those who feel they have the right balance.

These results highlight that access to roles with lower than full-time workloads are critical to engaging female talent in the Australian workforce. There is evidence to suggest that increasing access to reduced workload roles that have leadership potential and career growth would unlock this untapped potential. Given the higher labour force underutilisation rate for women than men in Australia (ABS, 2014), creating work opportunities where women can engage in the workforce in a capacity that is compliant with their life-stage and caring roles is necessary. Australian statistics show a pattern of increased maternal employment as children age (ABS, 2011), and results from study one show that women perceive that taking longer breaks makes the transition to work after childbirth difficult. Given the findings that women in such roles are the most productive members of the workforce

(Ernst & Young, 2013), a systemic adjustment to the proactive creation of such roles and promoting them to this demographic also makes good business sense.

Phase one of this research illustrated that mothers of young children are often motivated to return to work because they do not want to lose what they have worked hard to achieve in their careers. Career progression and family friendly work cultures (such as maternity leave, flexible work practices and the attitude of co-workers) were the things that many of the women in these focus groups reported as most important to them. These observations are supported by qualitative data in this second study. Of those in the sample that returned to work full-time, 44% cite career progression as a reason for returning to work, second after pressure on family income, which is much higher than the 23% of part-time employed mothers who report this as a reason.

The finding that for 41%, income was not an acknowledged factor in their return to work decision challenging the assumption about financial incentives. Others report that after accounting for the costs of childcare and the pay penalties incurred as a result of a career break, the financial incentives for mothers returning to work are small (Cassells, Miranti, Nepal, & Tanton, 2009) and that other incentives, such as enjoying their work or professional development, should be part of the narrative when understanding why women with young children return to work.

Despite over half of this group reporting that they would like to be working some hours, only 8% report that they have been unable to find suitable work, or starting their own business. This may be reflective of their previous experiences in the workforce (Millward, 2006) that have shaped their perception of not fulfilling 'ideal employee' expectations (Crittenden, 2001; Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007), they may experience bias or discrimination (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glisk, 2004; Fuegen,

Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004) or would not be able to find a suitable part-time role.

It is possible that these reasons for returning to work or not are subject to responding with social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993), with people reporting inaccurately to present themselves in a positive way. Low levels of reporting on reasons that are not congruent with this archetypical role of the mother (such as the self-development activity of study or not being the primary carer) were also evident.

The results also supported the hypothesis that the size of a mother's social network and satisfaction with this support would be positively related to psychological wellbeing. However, satisfaction with this social support was a stronger predictor of psychological wellbeing than size of the support network.

### **Limitations and areas for future research**

These two studies were a snapshot in time and not longitudinal; therefore, we cannot infer the transformational impact of becoming a parent, nor the impact of prenatal experience on the work status of women with young children. For example, extant research shows that before she becomes a parent, a woman's observations in the workplace can shape the way she perceives how her workplace and motherhood will interact and therefore influence her decision to return to work after childbirth (Millward, 2006). These observations include how other mothers are treated in the workplace, how they are treated in the workplace when pregnant and the attitudes of their managers (Millward, 2006). Future research into the experiences of women before, during and after pregnancy may provide a greater understanding of how gender gaps emerge and continue to grow.

Future research might also seek to understand more about why the relatively large (55%) proportion of those not engaged in paid employment who would like to be working some hours, are not actually seeking out employment opportunities.

This study specifically focused on a sample of women who are mothers of young children. Inferences about how this demographic of women differs from those without children, or men as parents cannot be made. To understand the impact of parenthood on the careers of women it is critical to disentangle the link between gender, parenthood and other career drivers. Most importantly, to understand gender equality in the workplace, future studies will need to include a critical sample of the population: men.

## **Chapter Six: Work and Babies Study Three**

Building on the findings of the first two Work and Babies studies, the need for a more focused exploration of the differing impact on parenthood on the work engagement of men and women is apparent. Literature reviews in Chapters One and Two explored how the imbalance in the domestic and professional spheres of life is associated with gender roles, particularly when it comes to parenthood.

The first two studies investigated the experiences of women returning to work after having children, with the aim of better understanding the impact of parenthood on the work engagement of women. To better understand how parenthood differentially impacts the careers of both men and women, this study moves the focus from just women to investigate career factors for both males and females. Expanding on the findings of the first two work and babies studies, which focused on motherhood and work status, factors that relate to career advancement will be explored in the third study.

Specifically, the aim of this third study is to examine the variables that may explain the gender gaps in career attainment (pay and role level), aspiration and satisfaction for parents and non-parents.

### **Parents at Work**

Behaviours that are associated with being a good mother (such as being nurturing, affectionate and generous) are often incompatible with those associated with the perfect employee (such as being competitive, dominant and independent). These inverse social roles can lead to the assumption that a good mother cannot be a competent employee at the same time (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glisk, 2004; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). Fulfilling domestic and caring responsibilities are the

traditional social roles of women, placing social value on women who successfully meet the expectations of that role (Eagly, 1987). It is a well-established argument that the concept of the perfect employee is incompatible with the schema of motherhood (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007), as the ideal worker is one who is unencumbered by other commitments (Crittenden, 2001).

A study by Fuegan and colleagues (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004) reported that working mothers are assumed to provide more physical care for their children than an employed father; however, working fathers are often judged to be better parents. It is often assumed that a mother will be ‘on-call’ for their children at all times, which competes with the archetypical ideal employee who is committed to their role first and foremost (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007). Role conflict can easily occur with mothers who work full-time, as they are working against the assumed caretaking role of a mother, which is assumed to take priority over her work commitments (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004).

It is important to note that these are not attitudes that are imposed on women, as it is equally likely that women themselves also hold these views—violating gender norms is perceived negatively by both men and women—as gender is not related to the reporting of sex-role bias (Butler & Skattebo, 2004). One particular study showed that women rate male job applicants as more committed than female applicants, yet men did not hold this same view (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004).

In this way, we can start to understand why the transition to parenthood has a lesser effect on a man’s work participation, pay or career trajectory than it does for women. Becoming a father is associated with a better career and higher pay as compared to childless men (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007), as they are working

within the boundaries of social role stereotyping where fathers provide financially for their families and mothers provide care.

Working fathers gain higher ratings of warmth than their childless male counterparts, but both groups are rated as equally competent (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glisk, 2004) and there is a greater chance that they will be positively viewed for hiring.

Research shows that in the workplace, an employed father, as compared to an employed mother, is seen as a better parent and more competent by others (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). One study found that when applying for a job, fathers were held to lower standards in terms of performance and commitment than non-parent men (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007). In contrast, mothers are held to a higher standard than non-parent women (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004).

### **Desired Career Aspiration**

Gender imbalance at senior levels of organisations has been partially attributed to the lack of perceived fit of women for these roles, as they are often judged as insufficiently competitive, ambitious or self-promoting (Heilman, 2012). The gender stereotypes and bias relating to leadership (a more detailed literature review in Appendix B) are not only descriptive but also prescriptive, describing not only how a woman or leader behaves, but how they are expected to behave (Castilla, 2011).

The tendency to seek out career opportunities is linked to the greater importance a person places on their work and career, and if a woman has preferences for a masculine work culture, it increases her probability of being in a management position (van Vianen & Fischer, 2002). It has therefore been inferred that women appear less frequently in top positions, due to lower desire or ambition than men for obtaining such roles.

There is some evidence that women are less likely to behave in a self-promoting manner, tending to undervalue their own skills, requiring encouragement before seeking out more senior roles, not applying for promotions without endorsement, and over-valuing the qualifications of their colleagues (Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2004). It has also been proposed that women do not affiliate with the characteristic of ambition, as it may be seen as egotistic, selfish and manipulative to be ambitious, (Fels, 2004). While being judged as ambitious may be considered a compliment for men, women could well avoid self-promoting behaviour in an attempt to not be judged as selfish or unlikable (McCarthy, 2011; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

The divergent career trajectories of men and women as they rise to the top of organisations are often attributed to gendered differences in career development behaviours and in aspiration. A 2011 survey of 2960 male and female managers in the UK (Institute of Leadership and Management, 2011) is often quoted as a source of data showing that women's career ambition and confidence is lower than men's. That study claimed that women are more hesitant to apply for jobs and promotions, have less career clarity, lower expectations, and less ambition to pursue senior roles than men. While this concept appears to have validity and the 'crisis in confidence' (Institute of Leadership and Management, 2011, p. 5) is readily absorbed into popular discourse, the statistical significance of this gap and the constructs of ambition and confidence remain undefined.

Coffman and Neuenfeldt (2014) investigated the career or life stage at which men and women's aspiration or confidence diverged, finding that although both enter their careers equally optimistic about their career paths, women's confidence declines as they become more experienced. No significant differences were found in



women's confidence based on marital status and parenthood, so the authors concluded that the decline in women's aspirations was based on their perceived lack of fit with the 'ideal worker' model, which is framed around high profile and visibility in the organisation, plus long hours and high commitment.

'Ambition' is a construct that is both challenging to define and often poorly understood, yet used to describe many different behaviours relating to behaviours that drive career success (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012). Judge and Kammeyer-Mueller (2012) defined ambition as the persistent, general striving for success, attainment and accomplishment. In this study however, particular focus is on specific plans or targets that an individual makes to achieve career goals, better referred to as career aspiration. The gender differences in ambition, aspiration and the way they are acted out are part of the narrative for explaining gender imbalance at senior levels of organisations (Heilman, 2012). What is still unknown is the role that parenthood plays in this dynamic: whether gender differences in aspiration are found between men and women both with and without children.

## **Career Success**

Career success can be conceptualised in terms of objective and subjective success. Objective career success indicators are observable factors, such as income and role level, whereas subjective success is the perception of quality or satisfaction with career factors (Hall, Lee, Kossek, & Heras, 2012). Chapter One outlines the gender gap for objective career success (gap in pay and representation at senior levels), but it appears that men and women also differ in their subjective career success. For example, Hogue, DuBois and Fox-Cardamone (2010) explained that one cause of the gender pay gap is differences in pay expectations with women expecting to be paid less than men at entry level (91.7% of male pay expectations) and an even

greater gap at peak career level (67.1% of male pay expectations). Men and women also use different measures to assess career success (Powell & Butterfield, 2003), men tend to use objective measures, such as salary and role level, while women use subjective measures, such as work-family balance (Sturges, 1999).

## **Workload**

Workload is considered to be the combination of both professional and domestic work. Australia is consistent with many other countries, as men and women do not differ in the total hours of 'work', but men engage in more market (paid) work and women more domestic (unpaid) work (Burda, Hamermesh, & Weil, 2013). Women doing the majority of the unpaid domestic and caregiving work is found, regardless of how many hours worked in professional roles (Baxter, 2009; Cassells, Miranti, Nepal, & Tanton, 2009). For example, the average domestic and caring workload for full-time employed women is 11 hours per week greater than full-time employed men, who average six hours per week more in paid employment (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009). In addition, women who are in the labour force are more likely to be in part-time employment than men. As a percentage of the female labour force, 44% of women work part-time and for Australian men, 16% of those in the workforce are employed part-time. This percentage of female part-time employment is much higher than the 2012 OECD average of 26.4% (OECD, 2012), indicating that the rate of female part-time employment amongst the employed population of Australians is comparatively high.

When examining gender equality in the workplace, understanding the patterns of paid and unpaid is necessary, as a change in one sphere will affect the other (Craig & Sawrikar, 2009) and the equal distribution of both paid and unpaid

work is part of what defines gender equality (Sorlin, Ohman, Blomstedt, Stenlund, & Lindholm, 2011).

## **Separation Anxiety**

Both the focus group research and the Work and Babies Survey (Chapters Four and Five) revealed that many mothers do not return to their roles within the first five years of childbirth, due to the importance they place on providing the primary care for their children. Playing a part in this may be maternal separation anxiety, which is defined as “an unpleasant emotional state tied to the separation experience: it may be evidenced by worry, sadness or guilt” (Hock, McBride, & Gnezda, 1989, p. 794).

It has been proposed that separation anxiety can have a powerful effect on a mother’s employment decisions, where the unpleasant emotional state that arises from apprehension to leave the child in another’s care can impact decisions that are made about the pursuit of a mother’s career (Hock & McBride, 1990). Low levels of this maternal anxiety linked to a preference for employment (Hock & DeMeis, 1990), in addition to socioeconomic (Cooklin, et al., 2014) and employment conditions (Cooklin, Canterford, Strazdins, & Nicholson, 2011) playing a role in maternal psychological wellbeing.

Separation anxiety is often attributed to mothers only; for example, the construct measure (Hock, McBride, & Gnezda, 1989) is named ‘Maternal Separation Anxiety Scale’. This language reinforces the assumption that it is the mother’s role to provide primary care and develop strong emotional attachments to a child (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). The discussion of gender equality in the workplace is dependent on gender equality in caring roles, as equal distribution of paid and

unpaid work is part of what defines gender equality (Sorlin, Ohman, Blomstedt, Stenlund, & Lindholm, 2011).

It is unknown if mothers and fathers have significantly different levels of separation anxiety and if separation anxiety moderates gender differences in career aspiration and success.

## **Core Self-evaluation and Identity**

In the context of career aspiration and success, investigating how our sense of self relates to parental and professional status may provide insight into the impact of parenthood on this gender gap. Concepts of self are complicated constructs (Owens, 2006), but are considered to be a core component of social knowledge (Greenwald, Banaji, Rudman, Farnham, Nosek, & Mellott, 2002). In this study, the constructs of core self-evaluation (CSE), gender role identity, and social role identity are considered.

**Core self-evaluation** is linked to the concept of positive self-regard, which is associated with life and job satisfaction (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). CSE reflects how people evaluate themselves, their worth, competence and capability. Judge, Locke and Durham (1997) describe CSE as a trait that is comprised of four factors: self-esteem (the value an individual places on themselves as a person), self-efficacy (estimate of how well they will perform at tasks), neuroticism (experience of negative emotion), and locus of control (belief of events being due to external or internal forces).

Judge, Erez, Bono and Thoresen (2003) explain that these four constructs are important and unique, but also indicate one common factor that is particularly important to work-related criteria, including job satisfaction, motivation,

performance, productivity, stress and leadership (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003; Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005).

**Gender role identity** is reflected by self-perceived masculine and feminine traits (Bem, 1974). Social role theory explains that the roles typically occupied by men and women create a gender stereotype of what it is to be feminine or masculine (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). Cuddy et al. (2004) examined judgments that people make about professional women and full-time homemakers, finding that women are perceived as either likeable or respected, but not both at the same time. Full-time homemakers, along with the elderly and disabled, are stereotypically seen as warm, but not competent. These groups are also pitied and occasionally admired, which is an indication that they are viewed as being lower status and having poor luck. In contrast, professional women are often perceived as being competent and of higher status but cold. As a result, they are viewed with more respect, envy and dislike. These women are judged as ambitious, competitive and assertive, which are perceived as unfeminine (Holt & Ellis, 1998), and as having masculine workplace culture preferences (van Vianen & Fischer, 2002).

Litzky and Greenhaus (2007) found that women were less likely than men to pursue a senior management role, partly because of the incongruence with the masculine characteristics of these roles and their personal characteristics. As a function of identifying as female and senior roles being typically masculine, women perceived their prospects for career advancement to be lower than men's. This raises the question of how self-perceived masculinity and femininity relates to career aspirations, for both men and women.

In their 2003 study, Powell and Butterfield reported that femininity is not related to aspiration, but high masculinity is related to aspirations for top

management roles for both men and women (Powell & Butterfield, 2003). Other studies show levels of aspiration have been shown to differ on the basis of gender (Litsky & Greenhaus, 2007) (Coffman & Neuenfeldt, 2014). It seems that gender differences may be better explained by differences in self-perceived masculinity and femininity.

The role of parenthood and its impact on these observed gender differences is also unknown. If there is a gender difference in aspiration, does this difference occur between men and women with no children, as well as between mothers and fathers?

**Social role identity** is considered to be a multidimensional construct that relates to an individual's social categorisation of the roles they occupy, such as their profession (Leach et al., 2008; Cameron, 2004). It is said to play a role in how we create and define our identity, by defining ourselves and generating self-esteem (Haslam, 2004). Social identity theory (Haslam, 2004) provides some guidance as to how gender differences in career aspiration and success may appear. The commonly quoted definition of social identity comes from Tajfel's (1978, p. 63) definition of social identity: "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership".

In this third Work and Babies study, the subject's strength of identity with their professional role and their parenting (or future parenting) roles is investigated in relation to career aspiration and success.

## **Research Hypotheses**

Based on the literature review and data from the first two Work and Babies studies, this third study aims to investigate the variables that may explain the gender gaps in career attainment (pay and role level), aspiration and satisfaction for parents

and non parents. In W&BIII, men and women, with and without children report on a number of variables related to aspiration and career success. The career variables measured are pay, role level, career aspiration and career satisfaction. Based on the literature review, the variables related to these career factors will also be tested: domestic & professional workload, masculinity, femininity, core self-evaluation, role centrality of parenthood and professions, and separation anxiety.

**Hypothesis 1a:** There will be significant group differences between men and women on the four dependent career variables: pay, role level, career aspiration and career satisfaction. These gender differences will be higher between parents (mother/father) than between non-parents (woman/man).

**Hypothesis 1b:** There will be significant group differences between men and women for the independent variables related to careers: workload (percentage of domestic workload and number of days per week in paid employment), parental separation anxiety (parents only), core self-evaluation, gender role identity (self-perceived masculinity and femininity), and social role identity (parental and occupational role centrality). These gender differences will be higher between parents (mother/father) than between non-parents (woman/man)

**Hypothesis 2.** In accounting for variance in the four career variables (pay, role level, aspiration and satisfaction) that showed group differences in hypothesis 1a, gender will no longer be significant once the independent variables of professional & domestic workload, separation anxiety, core self-evaluation, self-perceived masculinity & femininity, parental and occupational role centrality are accounted for.

## Method

Participants were invited to go to the [www.workandbabies.com](http://www.workandbabies.com) website to complete an online survey (approx. 20 minutes). The survey was open to anyone over the age of 18. Within the first few weeks the majority of participants were female parents. After seeking feedback, it was concluded that the work and babies website design was feminine in its style and language. A more 'neutral' parallel website was created at [www.careerbalance.com.au](http://www.careerbalance.com.au). Both [www.careerbalance.com.au](http://www.careerbalance.com.au) and [www.workandbabies.com](http://www.workandbabies.com) flyers and other materials (Appendix G) were distributed in equal proportions after this, resulting in a greater proportion of male and non-parent subjects completing the survey.

To connect participants with this survey, they were recruited in a variety of ways:

- Emails were sent to contacts of the researcher asking for them to pass it on.
- Flyers were distributed by hand in public spaces of Sydney, including the CBD, train stations (Macquarie Park, Townhall and Wynyard stations), universities (Macquarie University and University of Sydney) and shopping centres (Top Ryde Shopping Centre, Macquarie Centre and Broadway Shopping centre).
- Flyers were delivered to businesses in the Sydney Macquarie Park business district for employee distribution in common areas (such as reception and kitchen areas of workplaces)

**Participants.** In total, 1450 people completed the questionnaire, 159 of which were excluded from the analysis due to significant missing data ( $n = 153$ ) and being part of a small outlying group of 18 and 19 year olds ( $n = 6$ ). The final sample was  $n=1291$ .

As summarised in Table 6.1 below, over half of the sample (59%) were mothers and 12% were fathers; 10% were childless men and 19% childless women.



**Table 6.1: Gender and parenthood demographics of W&BIII sample**

<b>Males</b>			<b>Females</b>		
	<b>n</b>	<b>% of participants</b>		<b>N</b>	<b>% of participants</b>
Fathers	153	12	Mothers	759	59
Men	133	10	Women	246	19
(not parents)			(not parents)		
<b>Total</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>1005</b>	<b>78</b>

Table 6.2 summarises the demographic information based on age and parenthood.

**Table 6.2: W&BIII group demographic Summary**

<b>Overall</b>				
<b>Average age</b>	33.4			
<b>Median salary range</b>	Band 5 (\$58,501 to \$80,000)			
<b>Median role level</b>	Level 2: Line manager or supervisory role. For example, a shift manager/supervisor.			
<b>Median education level</b>	Bachelor degree			
	<b>Male</b>		<b>Female</b>	
<b>Average age</b>	33.7		33.4	
<b>Median salary range</b>	Band 6 (\$80,000 to \$130,000)		Band 5 (\$58,501 to \$80,000)	
<b>Median role level</b>	Level 2: Line manager or supervisory role. For example, a shift manager/supervisor.		Level 2: Line manager or supervisory role. For example, a shift manager/supervisor.	
<b>Median education level</b>	Bachelor degree		Bachelor degree	
	<b>Fathers</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Mothers</b>	<b>Women</b>
<b>Average age</b>	39.3	27.2	35.4	27.1
<b>Median salary range</b>	Band 6 (\$80,000 to \$130,000)	Band 4 (\$37,001 to \$58,500)	Band 5 (\$58,501 to \$80,000)	Band 4 (\$37,001 to \$58,500)
<b>Median role level</b>	Level 3: Mid level management.	Level 1: Support, clerical or operational role with no supervisory responsibilities.	Level 2: Line manager or supervisory role. For example, a shift manager/supervisor.	Level 1: Support, clerical or operational role with no supervisory responsibilities.
<b>Median education level</b>	Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree	Bachelor degree

**Measures. Career Aspiration.** The Managerial Aspiration Scale subscale of desired career aspiration (Tharenou & Terry, 1998) was used to reflect the attitudinal component of how motivated a person is to work towards career goals. This scale was adapted to accommodate less hierarchical organisational structures. For example, “I intend to apply for a higher position within management” was adapted to “I intend to apply for a higher position.” A 13-item Likert scale asked participants to respond with reference to their current or normal roles, with a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ).

**Objective Career Success** was assessed by pay and role level. Full-time (or equivalent) salary range for their current or previous role (if currently on maternity leave or not working) was indicated based on income range brackets ranging from 1 (\$0–\$6000) to 9 (\$180,000+). Current position classification was indicated in a

one-item scale ranging from 1 (support, clerical or operational role with no supervisory responsibilities) to 5 (top management/CEO).

*Subjective Career Success* was assessed with five items on the Career Satisfaction Scale (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990). Participant's rated, on a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), their satisfaction with the progress they have made towards their career, income, advancement and skill development goals ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ). For example, "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career" and "I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills".

*Workload* looks at both professional and domestic elements through two measures: the number of days per week in paid employment and the percentage of domestic work.

*Parental Separation Anxiety* was assessed with the Maternal Separation Anxiety Scale subscale 1 – MSAS (Hock, McBride, & Gnezda, 1989). This subscale consisted of 21 items ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ), answered on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) Likert scale. Given the sample of this study includes both men and women, items that refer to the mother were adjusted to refer to the mother and father (for example, "Children will be afraid in a new place without their mother [or father]"). Other scale items include items such as "I miss holding or cuddling my child when I am away from him/her"; "I worry when someone else cares for my child", and "My child is afraid and sad when he/she is not with me".

*Core self-evaluation* was measured with the Core Self Evaluation Scale (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003), which has 12 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ). Example

items include “When I try, I generally succeed”, “I determine what will happen in my life”, and “I am filled with doubts about my competence” (reverse scored).

*Self-perceived masculinity and femininity* was measured with Bem’s sex role inventory, short form (Bem, 1974). This scale yields two gender identity scores (masculine and feminine), calculated from the average ratings on a seven-point Likert scale. Each subscale consists of 10 items (masculinity subscale  $\alpha = 0.83$ ; femininity subscale  $\alpha = 0.88$ ). Participants described themselves on a scale from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (almost always true) with adjectives that are masculine (such as aggressive, dominant, assertive and willing to take risks), feminine (such as sympathetic, gentle, understanding and warm) or neutral (such as conscientious, reliable, truthful and tactful).

It is important to clarify that this scale does not reflect a single male/female paradigm where these are perceived as opposition degrees of a single dimension, as there is no evidence to support this concept (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchel, & Ristikari, 2011). Theorists, such as Bem (1974), have shown that both masculine and feminine characteristics can coexist within an individual, providing separate masculine and feminine scores for each subject.

*Role identity: parental and occupational centrality subscale* (Leach, et al., 2008). Each subscale has three items. The occupational centrality subscale included items such as “The fact that I am [a profession] is an important part of my identity” ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ). Each participant listed their profession in the demographics section of the survey, which was automatically inserted to these items. The parental role centrality subscale items were modified depending on the gender and parental status of the participants. For example, an item for parent role-centrality for women who were parents ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ) was phrased as “The fact that I am a mother is an important part

of my identity" ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ). For men who had children: "The fact that I am a father is an important part of my identity" ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ). For women without children: "The fact that I **will be** a mother is an important part of my identity" ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ), and for men without children: "The fact that I **will be** a father is an important part of my identity" ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ).

A complete list of W&BIII Survey items are included in Appendix F.

## Results

Table 6.3 shows the correlations between the variables in the Work and Babies III study.

**Table 6.3: Correlations of W&BIII study variables**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
<b>1</b> Gender	1															
<b>2</b> Children	-.201**	1														
<b>3</b> Age	-.016	-.529**	1													
<b>4</b> Education level	.018	-.012	.089**	1												
<b>5</b> % of domestic duties	.430**	-.310**	.212**	-.015	1											
<b>6</b> Days per week in paid work	-.198**	.067*	.071*	-.033	-.103**	1										
<b>7</b> Full-time (or equivalent) salary	-.071*	-.368**	.489**	.227**	.050	.191**	1									
<b>8</b> Current position classification/level	-.047	-.239**	.344**	.113**	.007	.145**	.507**	1								
<b>9</b> Career satisfaction	-.054	.024	.055	.109**	-.104**	.070*	.224**	.253**	1							
<b>10</b> Aspiration	-.118**	.252**	-.280**	.116**	-.208**	.094**	-.026	-.016	-.043	1						
<b>11</b> Masculinity	-.044	.008	.077**	-.023	-.002	.074*	.109**	.212**	.251**	.185**	1					
<b>12</b> Femininity	.194**	-.074*	.018	-.063*	.135**	-.057	-.084**	-.063*	.140**	-.057	.031	1				
<b>13</b> Core self-evaluation	-.056	-.116**	.136**	.077**	-.023	-.009	.236**	.201**	.463**	.074*	.229**	.079**	1			
<b>14</b> Parent role centrality	.099**	-.441**	.133**	.042	.146**	-.023	.171**	.130**	.068*	-.078*	.026	.268**	.093**	1		
<b>15</b> Occupation role centrality	.059*	-.103**	.114**	.203**	.036	.016	.235**	.244**	.236**	.146**	.116**	.075*	.059*	.170**	1	
<b>16</b> Separation anxiety	.046	. <sup>c</sup>	-.254**	-.112**	.068	.036	-.117**	-.077*	-.110**	-.086*	-.083*	.101**	-.219**	.271**	-.096**	1

\*\* p < .01; \* p < .05; c. Cannot be computed because at least one of the variables is constant. Gender: Male = 1, Female = 2; Children: Yes = 1, No = 2.

**Table 6.4: Group means and standard deviations for W&BIII study variables**

<b>Group</b>		<b>Desired aspiration</b>	<b>Pay range</b>	<b>Role level</b>	<b>Career satisfaction</b>	<b>Separation anxiety</b>	<b>Core self-evaluation</b>	<b>Masculinity</b>	<b>Femininity</b>	<b>Parent role centrality</b>	<b>Occupation role centrality</b>
<b>Father</b>	<b>Mean</b>	3.57	6.13	2.72	3.51	19.97	3.63	4.84	5.21	6.01	4.54
	<b>N</b>	136	143	143	136	124	138	137	137	136	136
	<b>SD</b>	0.85	1.19	1.26	0.74	4.22	0.55	0.74	0.79	1.03	1.41
<b>Mother</b>	<b>Mean</b>	3.31	5.02	2.22	3.33	20.53	3.54	4.73	5.65	6.15	4.67
	<b>N</b>	650	721	721	661	636	655	653	653	658	658
	<b>SD</b>	0.84	1.53	1.13	0.87	4.59	0.57	0.83	0.74	0.85	1.57
<b>Childless Man</b>	<b>Mean</b>	3.82	3.66	1.63	3.41	n/a	3.51	4.79	5.30	4.79	4.16
	<b>N</b>	109	115	115	110	n/a	109	110	110	111	111
	<b>SD</b>	0.87	2.12	0.99	0.90	n/a	0.62	0.29	0.87	1.84	1.71
<b>Childless Woman</b>	<b>Mean</b>	3.84	3.78	1.72	3.41	n/a	3.36	4.75	5.52	4.74	4.35
	<b>N</b>	212	226	226	215	n/a	218	214	214	216	216
	<b>SD</b>	0.67	1.85	0.99	0.83	n/a	0.63	0.85	0.80	1.93	1.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>Mean</b>	3.49	4.79	2.13	3.37	20.43	3.52	4.75	5.53	5.73	4.54
	<b>N</b>	1107	1205	1205	1122	760	1120	1114	1114	1121	1121
	<b>SD</b>	0.85	1.79	1.15	0.85	4.53	0.59	0.83	0.79	1.41	1.60

To test Hypothesis 1, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to assess the effect of groups (man/women/father/mother) on each of the dependent and independent variables. Using Pillai's trace, there was a significant effect on the variables, based on the group ( $V = 0.69$ ,  $F(4, 3210) = 28.8$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Separate univariate ANOVAs were then conducted between these groups, with results as follows.

**Hypothesis 1a.** No significant differences were found between groups on career satisfaction ( $F(3,1078) = 1.62$ ,  $p = 0.18$ ). Significant group differences were found for aspiration ( $F(3,1078) = 27.44$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), salary ( $F(3,1078) = 76.74$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ) and role level ( $F(3,1078) = 28.41$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). Pairwise group comparisons confirmed that significant differences were found between mothers and fathers, but not found between men and women without children: mothers reported lower scores than fathers on salary ( $t(1201) = 7.47$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), role level ( $t(1201) = -4.94$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ), and career aspiration ( $t(1201) = 3.38$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

**Hypothesis 1b.** No significant differences were found between groups on self-perceived masculinity ( $F(3,1078) = 0.66$ ,  $p = 0.58$ ). All other variables showed significant group differences: percentage of domestic duties ( $F(3,1078) = 148.42$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ); number of days per week employed ( $F(3,1078) = 17.65$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ); core self-evaluation ( $F(3,1078) = 6.41$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ); femininity ( $F(3,1078) = 15.11$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ); occupational role centrality ( $F(3,1078) = 4.24$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ); and parent role centrality ( $F(3,1078) = 85.61$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ).

Pairwise group comparisons revealed significant differences between mothers and fathers, but not between men and women without children at the  $p < 0.01$  level. As compared to the fathers group, mothers reported lower number of days in



employment per week ( $t_{(1201)} = 7.09, p = 0.00$ ), whereas fathers reported lower scores than mothers on the percentage of domestic work ( $t_{(1265)} = -18.87, p = 0.00$ ) and femininity ( $t_{(1110)} = -6.06, p = 0.00$ ). No other significant differences between mothers and fathers were found.

At the  $p < 0.01$  level, there were no significant differences found between men and women without children. At the  $p = 0.05$  level, women reported higher ratings of self-perceived femininity ( $t_{(1110)} = -2.44, p = 0.01$ ) and core self-evaluation ( $t_{(1116)} = 2.14, p = 0.04$ ).

Parental separation anxiety applies only to parents and was therefore not included in the four-group MANOVA. A one-way ANOVA revealed that no significant difference was found between mothers and fathers on self-reported separation anxiety ( $F_{(1, 758)} = 1.57, p = 0.21$ ).

**Table 6.5: Means and SD || W&BIII**

	<b>Father (valid n = 134)</b>		<b>Mother (valid n = 631)</b>		<b>Man (valid n = 108)</b>		<b>Woman (valid n = 209)</b>	
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Aspiration* (a)</b>	3.56	0.85	3.32	0.84	3.81	0.88	3.84	0.68
<b>Salary* (b)</b>	6.12	1.19	5.06	1.51	3.76	2.18	3.79	1.85
<b>Level* (c)</b>	2.69	1.28	2.23	1.14	1.66	1.01	1.72	0.99
<b>Career satisfaction (d)</b>	3.50	0.75	3.34	0.87	3.41	0.91	3.42	0.83
<b>% domestic work* (e)</b>	41.35	18.09	74.97	16.3	51.67	25.15	55.05	26.94
<b># days* (f)</b>	4.87	0.80	3.91	1.56	4.53	1.72	4.16	1.67
<b>Separation anxiety (g)</b>	19.97	4.22	20.53	4.59				
<b>CSE* (h)</b>	3.63	0.55	3.54	0.58	3.51	0.62	3.67	0.63
<b>Masculinity (i)</b>	4.83	0.73	4.73	0.84	4.80	0.88	4.75	0.86
<b>Femininity* (j)</b>	5.21	0.8	5.64	0.75	5.3	0.88	5.53	0.80
<b>Occupation role centrality* (j)</b>	4.53	1.41	4.68	1.58	4.18	1.71	4.38	1.69
<b>Parental role centrality* (k)</b>	6.01	1.04	6.16	0.86	4.78	1.86	4.38	1.69

\* Significant group differences at  $p = 0.01$

(a) Aspiration ranging from 1: completely false, to 5: completely true

(b) Salary range: scale from 1 (\$0) to 9 (\$180,000+)

(c) Role level range from 1 to 5: Level One: Support, clerical or operational role with no supervisory responsibilities; Level Two: Line manager or supervisory role. For example, a shift manager/supervisor; Level Three: Mid level management. Responsible for managing a team on an ongoing basis or having some strategic responsibilities; Level Four: Senior manager/Director; Level Five: Top Management/CEO

(d) Career satisfaction ranging from 1 to 4

(e) Your percentage of domestic responsibility (0% to 100%)

(f) Number of days in paid employment per week

(g) Parental separation anxiety scale. Scores ranging from 7 to 35

(h) Core self-evaluation, ranging from 1 to 5

(i) Self-perceived masculinity, ranging from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (almost always true)

(j) Self-perceived femininity, ranging from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (almost always true)

(j) Occupation role centrality. Ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)

(k) Parental role centrality. Ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)

The results reported for Hypothesis 1 indicate that there were no group differences on the four dependent variables between men and women without children. For this reason, only parents were included in multiple regression analyses for testing Hypothesis 2. Likewise, because there were no group differences on career satisfaction, this was not included as a dependent variable. For each dependent variable (salary, role level and career aspiration), gender was entered into step one, then the remaining study variables in step two.

**Salary.** In step one, gender significantly accounted for 6% of the variance in pay ( $t_{(736)} = -6.93$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). In the step two model, gender was no longer a significant predictor of pay ( $t_{(726)} = -0.22$ ,  $p = 0.83$ ). The inclusion of the additional variables accounted for 31% of the variance in pay. Significant positive predictors of salary included education level, age, number of days in paid work per week, core self-evaluation, and occupational role centrality. Femininity and percentage of domestic duties were shown to be a significant negative predictor of pay. Separation anxiety, masculinity and parent role centrality were not significantly related to pay.

**Table 6.6: Linear model of predictors for salary (mothers and fathers) || W&BIII**

	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>95% CI for b</b>	<b>P</b>
<b>Step one</b>				
(Constant)	7.06 (0.27)		6.54 – 7.58	0.00
Gender	-0.99 (0.14)	-0.25	-1.26 – -0.71	0.00
<b>Step two</b>				
(Constant)	1.92 (0.76)		0.44 – 3.40	0.01
Gender	-0.04 (0.16)	-0.01	-0.36 – 0.29	0.83
Education	0.17 (0.03)	0.18	0.11 – 0.23	0.00
Age	0.06 (0.01)	0.22	0.04 – 0.08	0.00
% domestic work	-0.02 (0.00)	-0.21	-0.02 – 0.01	0.00
Days in work per week	0.15 (0.03)	0.15	0.09 – 0.21	0.00
Separation anxiety	0.01 (0.01)	0.02	-0.02 – 0.03	0.52
CSE	0.40 (0.09)	0.15	0.23 – 0.57	0.00
Masculinity	0.04 (0.06)	0.02	-0.08 – 0.15	0.51
Femininity	-0.32 (0.06)	-0.17	-0.45 – -0.20	0.00
Parent centrality	0.04 (0.06)	0.03	-0.07 – 0.16	0.45
Occupation centrality	0.13 (0.03)	0.13	0.07 – 0.19	0.00

Note:  $R^2 = 0.06$  for step one;  $R^2 = 0.31$  for step two (both  $p < 0.001$ )

**Role level.** Table 6.7 reports the results for the regression on role level.

Gender alone significantly accounted for 2% of the variance in role level ( $t_{(736)} = -3.67$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). In step two, gender was no longer a significant predictor of role level ( $t_{(726)} = 1.05$ ,  $p = 0.29$ ), with the full list of variables accounting for 19% of the variance in role level. Age, number of days in paid work per week, core self-evaluation, and masculinity were significant positive predictors of role level in the

analysis. Significant negative predictors were femininity and percentage of domestic work.

**Table 6.7: Linear model of predictors for role level (mothers and fathers) || W&BIII**

	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>95% CI for b</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Step one</b>				
(Constant)	3.06 (0.21)		2.65 – 3.48	0.00
Gender	-0.42 (0.11)	-0.13	-0.64 – -0.19	0.00
<b>Step two</b>				
(Constant)	-1.19 (0.64)		-2.44 – 0.07	0.06
Gender	0.14 (0.14)	0.05	-0.13 – 0.42	0.29
Education	0.02 (0.03)	0.02	-0.04 – 0.07	0.56
Age	0.04 (0.01)	0.16	0.02 – 0.05	0.00
% Domestic work	-0.01 (0.00)	-0.13	-0.01 – 0.00	0.00
Days in work per week	0.11 (0.03)	0.14	0.05 – 0.16	0.00
Separation anxiety	0.00 (0.01)	0.02	-0.02 – 0.02	0.95
CSE	0.20 (0.07)	0.10	0.06 – 0.34	0.01
Masculinity	0.22 (0.05)	0.16	0.13 – -0.32	0.00
Femininity	-0.22 (0.05)	-0.14	-0.32 – -0.11	0.00
Parent centrality	0.13 (0.05)	0.10	0.04 – 0.23	0.01
Occupation centrality	0.13 (0.03)	0.17	0.08 – 0.18	0.00

Note:  $R^2 = 0.02$  for step one;  $R^2 = 0.19$  for step two (F change both  $p < 0.001$ )

**Desired career aspiration.** As reported in Table 6.8, gender accounted for 1.6% of the variance in role levels between mothers and fathers ( $t_{(731)} = -3.41$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) in step one, but was no longer a significant predictor of pay when all other variables were entered into the model ( $t_{(721)} = -1.70$ ,  $p = 0.89$ ). Together, the full list

of variables accounted for 15% of the variance in aspiration scores, with education level, number of days in work per week, masculinity and occupational role centrality are positive predictors of the variance in desired career aspiration. Age was a significant negative predictor.

**Table 6.8: Linear model of predictors for aspiration (mothers and fathers) || W&BIII**

	<b>B (SE)</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>95% CI for b</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Step one</b>				
(Constant)	3.90 (0.15)		3.60 – 4.20	0.00
Gender	-0.28 (0.08)	-0.13	-0.44 – -0.12	0.00
<b>Step two</b>				
(Constant)	3.74 (0.47)		2.81 – 4.67	0.00
Gender	-0.17 (0.10)	-0.08	-0.37 – 0.03	0.09
Education	0.07 (0.02)	0.13	0.03 – 0.11	0.00
Age	-0.03 (0.01)	-0.18	-0.04 – -0.02	0.00
% Domestic work	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.08	-0.01 – 0.00	0.09
Days in work per week	0.09 (0.02)	0.16	0.05 – 0.13	0.00
Separation anxiety	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.07	-0.03 – 0.00	0.07
CSE	0.01 (0.05)	0.01	-0.10 – 0.11	0.90
Masculinity	0.17 (0.04)	0.16	0.09 – 0.24	0.00
Femininity	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.02	-0.10 – 0.06	0.60
Parent centrality	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.06	-0.13 – 0.01	0.11
Occupation centrality	0.08 (0.20)	0.15	0.04 – 0.12	0.00

Note:  $R^2 = 0.016$  for step one;  $R^2 = 0.150$  for step two (F change both  $p < 0.001$ )

## **W&BIII Summary of Results and Discussion**

The results of the third Work and Babies study confirm the premise of this research – the impact of parenthood on the career factors of men and women. The first hypothesis that there would be a larger gap between mothers and fathers than between men and women without children when it came to career factors of pay, role level and aspiration was confirmed, but with an unexpected finding: The gap was not just smaller - it did not exist between men and women without children. Despite this, no group differences were found on the perception of quality or satisfaction with career factors; all are as equally satisfied about the progress they have made in their careers. The second part of hypothesis one showed very similar patterns, with no gender differences between men and women without children, but mothers reported lower number of days in employment per week and fathers reported lower percentages than mothers on domestic work and femininity scores. Despite including eight independent variables, femininity, domestic and professional workloads were the only ones showing gender differences, indicating that there is more similarity than difference when it comes to these factors.

With the gender differences between parents on pay, role level and aspiration, the second hypothesis was supported, showing that gender alone was no longer significant when other variables were accounted for.

When it comes to the pay and role level in the group of parents, higher rates of domestic work and femininity were predictors of lower pay and lower role levels; variables that mothers rated significantly higher than fathers. Positive core self-evaluation and the strength of identity with professional roles were also positive predictors of pay and role level, yet these variables did not significantly differ between mothers and fathers.

In terms of desired career aspiration, the results in this study show that masculinity was a significant predictor rather than gender. While the rating of femininity was higher in mothers than fathers, this was not a significant predictor of career aspiration. This result is consistent with previous research that shows femininity is not related to aspiration, but high masculinity is related to aspirations for top management roles for both men and women (Powell & Butterfield, 2003). Unlike pay and role level, the amount of domestic work did not account for variance in aspiration, yet the number of days in paid work was, on which fathers rate higher than mothers.

The relationship between aspiration and masculinity reflects the cognitive association between leadership and masculine adjectives (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011; Schein, 2001). Given that senior roles are typically occupied by men and are often characterised as highly masculine (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchel, & Ristikari, 2011; Ryan M. K., Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011), self-perceived masculinity and femininity may impact perceived congruence and hence aspiration towards higher level roles. In this way, senior roles that are typically held by men may be better understood as being held by those who are highly masculine, irrespective of gender. By being highly masculine in their competency descriptions, standards and expectations, these senior roles may naturally attract those who self identify with masculinity traits. However, the results of this study show that there are no gender differences on self perceived masculinity. This indicates that social role expectations, not self identity, may be the source of this observation of men occupying these masculine type roles. Consistent with this extant literature, femininity was associated with being female (specifically a mother), but femininity was not related to career aspiration.



This research is not the first to show that mothers do more unpaid domestic work (Burda, Hamermesh, & Weil, 2013) and have higher rates of femininity than fathers (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004), which were all predictors for pay and role level. It does show however that men and women without children did not significantly differ on these variables, indicating that the social role stereotypes associated with motherhood play a large role in the gender gaps of paid and domestic work.

One very interesting finding in this research is that mothers and fathers do not differ in their reported levels of separation anxiety from their children, nor on their strength of identity as a parent. As the name infers, maternal separation anxiety is mostly associated with mothers and considered to be a deterrent for women with children fully participating in the workforce. However, the anxiety associated with leaving their child in the care of others is not the exclusive domain of mothers, as fathers in the study report equal levels of concern, and this concern is not related to variance in pay, role levels or career aspiration.

Core self-evaluation also significantly predicted higher pay and role level. This finding provides insight into the popular literature that is intended to empower women and increase their confidence, as a programmatic solution for gender inequality in the workplace. With literature such as *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg (2013) becoming more widely read, there is considerable discussion around 'reticence': the pattern of behaviour where women undervalue their own skills, require encouragement before seeking out more senior roles, to not apply for promotions without endorsement and over-value the qualifications of their colleagues (Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2004). Nevertheless, the results of

this current study showed that core self-evaluation did not actually differ between males and females.

## **Research Limitations & Areas for Future Research**

One of the limitations of this study and W&BII is the single point in time, cross sectional data collection methodology. This reliance on self reported data is a limitation is one that many organisational psychology studies (Sackett & Larson, 1990). Combined with the use of an electronic survey, this study is sensitive to common method variance, where the variance is attributed to the measurement method, rather than the actual constructs they are said to measure (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). The topic of parenthood and careers cannot ignore the transformative effect of lifestage transitions, iterative changes over long periods of time and the complex context in which these changes occur. For these reasons, this research would ideally be collected from multiple sources (such as behavioural observations) over a period of time. While these results provide insight into the interaction of multiple variables on the same population at a single point in time, interpretations of these results cannot be extended to explain the experience of this population over time, nor cause and effect of variables.

The method used to collect the data in all three studies relied on convenience samples, where participants were invited to take part in the studies. The methods of recruiting and sampling methods used in applied psychological research often rely on convenience samples such as students. This has been critiqued as a source of bias, as these samples are not representative of the wider population of interest (Shen, Kiger, Davies, Rash, Simon & Ones, 2011). To mitigate the effects of this sample bias in this study, a large sample size was collected to ensure the analysis was able to detect effects with greater precision point estimates and smaller confidence intervals (Shen

et al., 2011). The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between variables in the context of the sample that were part of this study. Given the limitations of interpreting the results of a convenience sample, the results of this study should not be to generalised to the broader Australia population.

The operationalization of the constructs used in this study simplified somewhat complicated variables. For example, the scale used for Aspiration required subjects to reflect on their intentions, rather than using observations of the behaviour reflective of creating specific plans or targets that an individual makes to achieve career goals. When it comes to the measure of parenthood identity and separation anxiety, it is possible that the socially constructed meaning of parenthood (Hays, 1996) and associated norms and expectations creates a self report bias towards providing socially desirable answers (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002).

Longitudinal studies would have been the preferred methodology, as this data summarises the experiences of people across many different lifestyles, and does not account for the subjective experience – for example having a newborn vs school aged child, or parenting for a child with a disability. However, examining the impact of parenthood on the careers of women would require a time period decades long, which is beyond the scope of this study. Because of this, the directions of the relationships between variables are unknown, not allowing for the insight into which is the cause and which is the effect, nor whether there are other factors influencing these outcomes. For this reason, care has been taken to not infer causality between variables in this study, but to show relationships between variables for this single time snapshot.

Similarly, in an effort for consistency with social data and extant research, gender was measured as a binary construct of male/female. This does not

sufficiently recognise the full spectrum of gender diversity. In addition, this research and much that it cited assume primary caring responsibility of mothers and the heterosexuality in parenting. While this may be the most common scenario, it does not recognise the diversity of Australian families. Ideally this research and others that follow would allow for this variance in gender and family structures.

This research focused on subjects in Australia, which has its own gender role norms, and social policies such as tax, childcare and parental leave systems. A consideration of similarities and differences would be required before interpreting these findings in cultures outside of Australia.

The linear models in this study confirmed the hypothesis that the variables tested would significantly account for variance in pay, role level and aspiration. While these variables accounted for 31%, 19% and 15% of the variance in these scores, there is quite a large amount of unexplained variance in these variables. There is no doubt that the factors that influence pay, role level and aspiration and explain the gender gap between mothers and fathers are complex and not fully captured by this study. Along with the limitations outlined above, this study grouped all mothers and fathers together in the analysis, with no ability to assess the more subgroups of parents. A more detailed and subjective analysis of the impact of parenthood on men and women would be able to better explain for the variance unaccounted for in this study

## **Chapter Seven – Conclusion and Contributions**

The first two Work and Babies studies provide insight into the experiences of mothers with young children as it relates to their work status. This insight provides information on why women do and do not engage in paid employment when they have young children, as well as how their work status relates to their wellbeing and experiences of parenthood. These studies found evidence to disconfirm the idea that the experience of motherhood is related to the work status of mothers with young children. Despite the overwhelming preference for part-time employment, in this sample of mothers with young children, working full-time was predicted by higher salaries and working for larger organisations, and was associated with career development reasons for returning to work. In addition, the emotional attachment to the organisation predicted a mother's intention to return to work if she was on maternity leave. When it comes to the emotional wellbeing of women in this demographic, study two found evidence to show that having a match between preferred and actual work status was related to wellbeing. Specifically, mothers employed full-time and wanting to work less reported higher levels of anxiety than those who have the right balance. This study also illustrated the positive impact of social support on the wellbeing of mothers of young children.

The third Work and Babies study illustrates the impact of parenthood on career factors for men and women. These results show that gender differences on variables of pay, role levels, career aspiration, and percentage of domestic work did not exist in the sample of men and women without children; these results indicate that parenthood plays a far greater role in this gender divide than was anticipated, as there is no evidence of gender inequity between men and women without children,

but consistent evidence of gender inequity between mothers and fathers when it comes to pay, professional role levels, engagement in paid work, career aspiration and domestic workloads. The regression analysis was able to show that it is not gender alone that accounts for the differences in aspiration and objective career success. This study indicates that variance in core self-evaluation, masculinity and strength of identity with professional roles better accounts for these differences on these variables, yet mothers and fathers do not significantly differ from one another on these variables. The gap in aspiration between mothers and fathers in this study cannot be explained by group differences in masculinity, femininity, core self-evaluation, role identity or domestic workload.

Given that research shows that domestic responsibilities can limit individuals' resources they put towards their career, involvement in domestic and work domains is inversely related (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999) and mothers in this study show higher percentages of domestic work and less days in paid work than fathers. The only other significant variable between mothers and fathers was femininity. It is mothers that report lower aspiration and objective career success than fathers, but no differences in satisfaction with their career success, masculinity, core self-evaluation or in strength of self-identification with parental or occupational roles. While stronger identification with occupational roles was linked to higher aspiration and objective career success, parental role identification showed no relationship with pay or aspiration, indicating that it is the identification with your profession that predicts aspiration and career success, but identity as a parent does not, with both mothers and fathers identify with equal strength towards their roles as parents.

The differing impact of parenthood on the careers of men and women is shown in these studies, as it appears that gender roles, femininity and gendered

division of paid and domestic work have an impact on the career variable gaps that do not exist between men and women without children. In the HILDA report of 2011, 71% of Australians agreed that whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is being a mother. This same attitude is expressed towards men, with 71% agreeing that being a father is the most important role (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011). This was reflected in this study, with no gender difference in parental role centrality; yet despite parenthood being perceived as similarly important for men and women, it is generally expected that mothers will provide more emotional and physical care for their children than fathers (Etaugh & Folger, 1998). In the context of social role theory, this may mean that it is highly important for a woman to provide care for her children and it is equally important for a man to provide financially for their family, hence the gaps on engagement in domestic and professional work, as well as pay, role level and aspiration between mothers and fathers, but not between men and women without children. This theory is reinforced by the HILDA survey findings that reflect similar attitudes reported in Australia: nearly half (49%) of people surveyed agreed that mothers who do not really need the money should not work and over half of people (58%) did not think it was okay for children under three years of age to be placed in childcare all day for five days a week, even if the childcare is good (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011).

In this way, we can start to understand why parenthood has a lesser effect on a man's work participation, pay or career trajectory than it does for women. Becoming a father is associated with a better career and higher pay as compared to childless men (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007), as they are working within the boundaries of social role stereotyping where fathers provide financially for their families and mothers provide care.

Extant literature shows that working fathers gain higher ratings of warmth than their childless male counterparts, but both groups are rated as equally competent (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glisk, 2004), and there is a greater chance that they will be positively viewed for hiring. In the workplace an employed father, as compared to an employed mother, is seen as a better parent and more competent by others (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004). One study found that when applying for a job, fathers were held to lower standards in terms of performance and commitment than non-parent men (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007). In contrast, mothers are held to a higher standard than non-parent women (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004).

These social roles expectations of men in the professional sphere of work may provide insight as to why men whose family life impacts on their work life, such as when working flexibly, receive lower performance ratings than childless men (Butler & Skattebo, 2004). Within a social role theory framework, it indicates that men are rewarded by being fathers only so long as they conform to the gender role stereotype of the breadwinner. If any caring responsibilities impact their work, it appears that father's work performance is judged harshly, acting as a deterrent for men to go against these gender norms by equally contributing to domestic and caring work.

The think-manager, think male stereotype (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011), would infer a challenge for those who identify as both feminine and a leader. However, the data in this thesis indicate that mothers do not experience difficulty holding both masculine and feminine self-perceptions at the same time. Van Vianen and Fischer's study (2002) found that both men and women are equally attracted to competitive environments, but women saw salary and work role status as less important. They concluded that women were more interested in maintaining



work-life balance and avoiding the stress associated with senior management roles. However, this study did not find any evidence on a link between stress and work engagement when analysing the data of mothers with young children who work fulltime, part time or not at all. Despite this finding, these concerns associated with high senior level roles may be valid, given the higher domestic responsibility carried by women, making the resources of time and energy to devote to career related activities more scarce.

While the gender pay gap and lower representation of women in senior roles is observed in Australia, it is likely that these differences are a function of women as parents doing higher levels of domestic work, fewer days in paid work and having higher self-perceived femininity, which may interplay with the bias and perceptions of leaders in the workplace.

With factors such as self-perceived masculinity showing no gender differences, but being positively associated with aspiration and role levels, it may be that the factors at play in this dynamic are more of a pull than a push. In other words, focusing on a push to increase masculine work styles (such as assertiveness and agency), positive sense of self and educational levels in women as a strategic plan to close the gender gaps, are most likely to be ineffective, as there is no gender gap on these variables. It is likely that factors, such as femininity and domestic work, pull women away from career success as they become parents. It is plausible that in an effort to close the gender gap, it is the increased self-perceived femininity, higher core self-evaluation as parents and domestic work for men as fathers that should be the focus. To close the gender gap, consideration of systemic change in both the home and the workplace appears logical; these two spheres are not independent of each other, as a change in one will affect the other (Craig & Sawrikar, 2009). For this

reason, gender equity in the workplace is required to occur in tandem with gender equity in the home. It has been argued that gender equality in the workplace will not be achieved without changes in gender roles in families and vice versa (Bailyn, 2010).

This perspective is summed up by Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, who in 2015 reflected on her eight years in this role:

“Over the eight years I have been in the role I have become more and more convinced of two things:

Firstly, that to deliver equality for women we actually have to focus on men.

And secondly, that we must make the case for change personal.

Why men?

In my view, one reason many initiatives fail to progress gender equality is that they focus solely on engaging and changing women — from the way women network to the way women lead. Too many organisations look to women alone to change the organisational practices that maintain the status quo. Such an approach fails to recognise the site of most organisational power. The fact is that in most businesses men control both the human and financial resources.

Placing the onus on women to fix the problem of women's under-representation means that failures are laid at the door of women, rather than identified as systemic deficiencies.

If I had to choose one thing to change, it would be for caring responsibilities to be shared equally between men and women, because there is more that unites us, than divides us.

Women, I encourage you to take on this as a mantra; if equality is my birthright, why should I accept anything less?”

## **Areas for Future Research**

These three studies look at a snapshot in time and do not infer longitudinal trends. For example, in W&BIII, men and women without children are not considered as the 'before children' group, as they represent both those who will have children one day and those who will not. While this study gives us some insight into the differing impact of parenthood on men and women's careers, the details of how this process plays out during this life stage transition remains uncertain. More detailed longitudinal data that can track career and domestic related variables before and after children, with the same sample providing much richer data.

One area for longitudinal study is the potential of declining aspiration or ambition for women as they face systemic barriers while they progress through their careers. This research supports the idea that the observed differences in desired career aspiration between men and women with children, but not those without children, may be partially a function of age. The results of W&BIII indicated that age significantly accounted for the variance in desired career aspiration, showing aspiration declining with age. Older, more experienced women may have adjusted their expectations as they face barriers to advancement over time (Powell & Butterfield, 2003). Having a greater awareness, more experience and a better understanding of what it takes to get to the top, older women may have lower aspirations than younger women who are yet to face these challenges. Linsky and Greenhaus (2007) proposed three dilemmas related to women's lower aspirations:

1. Highly educated women are choosing to stay out of the workforce because they don't believe they can 'have it all' and do not feel compelled to try;
2. Women tend to choose roles that are more flexible and less stressful because they are not as willing to make personal sacrifices as men;
3. Career breaks and non-linear career paths are great barriers to promotions.

The first two studies in this thesis and many more in the literature look to women to find the answers for gender inequity in the Australian workforce. However, W&BIII indicates that men's experiences during the lifestage transition into parenthood, and how this interacts with their self-perception and career aspirations, is an area worth exploring. Earlier sections of this paper have explored gender stereotypes and how these are particularly pertinent for parents. The literature thus far has not established the extent to which these gender stereotypes and biases are influenced by self-stereotyping processes where individuals see themselves as similar to those within their social group (Leach, et al., 2008). One area to study may be men's lower engagement in caring and domestic work as a result of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Given that mothers are assumed to be primary carers of children (Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004), the majority of unpaid domestic and caregiving work is done by women, regardless of how many hours worked in professional roles (Baxter, 2009; Cassells, Miranti, Nepal, & Tanton, 2009), and they are assumed to provide more emotional and physical care for their children than fathers (Etaugh & Folger, 1998), while becoming a father is associated with a better career and higher pay as compared to childless men (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007), the stereotype of fathers being less competent in caring and domestic tasks appears to be strong. While men may not believe the stereotype is true, just being reminded that it exists (such as through media representation and social reinforcement) could lead to lower performance in these tasks (Steele & Aronson, 1995), lower motivation (Fogliati & Bussey, 2013), reduced interest (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005), and disengagement. Research into stereotype threat for men in caring roles and ways to counter it, so as to increase father's motivation to engage in these tasks, would be a very useful area to explore.

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## **Appendix A: Literature Summary of the Positive Organisational Outcomes of Increased Diversity**

**Increased innovation and creativity.** Gender diversity is not just about women in leadership. Studies have shown that diversity in teams can facilitate greater innovation and creativity when it comes to problem solving (Page, 2007; Hong & Page, 2004; Kurtulus, 2011). The creativity of diverse teams far exceeds that of homogenous teams (Phillips, Apfelbaum, & Richeson, 2011). This relates to more than just gender, as a broad cultural and gender experience expands idea generation and creativity. In addition, researchers have found that innovation is positively linked with gender and cultural diversity (Page, 2007). It has been found that by having greater diversity and therefore an improved talent base, an organisation can benefit from a mix of skills and perspectives, when solving difficult problems (Page, 2007, p. 10). These findings explain that it is the diversity of perspectives — ways of representing situations and problems — that is responsible for these positive outcomes.

**Greater employee satisfaction, engagement and retention.** Research has found that decreased turnover intentions were associated with employees' positive perceptions of an organisation's stance on diversity and the degree to which minority employees are integrated into the work environment, known as the perception of the "diversity climate" (McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez, & Hebl, 2007).

The benefits of a positive perception of the diversity climate in an organisation flows on to all employees as it is related to decreased turnover intention (Kaplan,

Wiley, & Maertz, 2011) and increased job satisfaction and engagement (Catalyst Information Centre, 2011).

**Corporate social responsibility and reputation.** Female board representation has been shown to have a positive impact on corporate reputation, especially those who operate close to the final customer (Brammer, Millington, & Pavelin, 2009). It is proposed that this occurs because an organisation with female board members reflects social expectations of gender equality in leadership (Sanders, Zehner, Fagg, & Hellicar, 2013) and that visible diversity is considered to be an identifiable key feature of a sustainable and profitable organisation (Hillman, Shropshire, & Canella, 2007).

The presence of female board members in the UK is viewed as favourable by their consumers and greater numbers of female board members is linked to positive ratings of corporate social responsibility (Catalyst Information Centre, 2011).

## **Appendix B: Literature Review on the Causes of the Gender Pay Gap**

### **Why the gap exists: What existing research tells us**

**1. Discrimination.** Differences in pay between men and women have been partially attributed to discrimination in the workplace. Using the 2010 HILDA survey data, Watson (2010) reported the difference in male and female manager pay “... is possibly due to discrimination” (Watson, 2010, p. 69). The Watson report (2010) shows that women still experience an increased probability of workplace and job application discrimination — and it is not because women are more sensitive and perceptive about discriminatory experiences.

It is far more common for women to indicate experiences of discrimination than men, with 10.4% reporting some form of discrimination in the course of employment, as compared to the male rate of 5.3% (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011). Reflecting the findings of greater pay gaps in male dominated industries (WGEA, 2014; ABS, 2014), it has been demonstrated that as the proportion of males in an industry increases, so to does the proportion of female discrimination, but this trend is reversed for men (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011).

This increased experience of discrimination by women in industries with high male representation may be explained by evidence that shows when people violate traditional gender stereotypes, they can be more susceptible to various forms of discrimination (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glisk, 2004). The grouping of typically male and typically female work may be the sources of discrimination towards women in these male dominated industries.

In their 2009 macroeconomic report on the economic impact of the gender pay gap in Australia, NATSEM concluded that 60% of the gender wage gap “is due to either direct discrimination or other factors to do with being a woman” (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009, p. 1). In this report, they acknowledge that measuring the impact of discrimination is very challenging, so they held other contributing factors constant (such as human capital and labour market factors), determining that 60% of the variance in wages was explained by gender alone. Other factors that play a role in this gap are industry segregation (25%); labour force history (7%); the under representation of women in large organisations (3%); and differing vocational qualifications (5%) (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009).

These findings are particularly interesting, as factors such as gender segregation across industries (male dominated vs. female dominated industries) with their differing pay, as well as gender differences in labour force history as a result of time out of the workforce for caring responsibilities are weighted as contributing to slightly less than a third (32%) of the gender pay gap. This report concluded that gender-based discrimination and gender differences in personal attributes, such as motivation and drive, attribute to the impact of the gender factor. However, it has been found by another study (Carter & Silva, 2011) that gender differences in motivation and ambition do not contribute to this gender gap, as women who engage in the same self-promotional activities or have the same post-graduate qualifications, do not benefit from these as much as their male counterparts. Thus, gender based discrimination and not gender differences in attributes are most likely a high contributing factor to the pay gap.



The challenge for discrimination metrics in the workplace is the subversive and systemic discrimination, which is much more difficult to identify and address. These subtle and complex biases that occur as a result of unconscious assumptions have been termed ‘second order discrimination’ and have been argued to systematically disadvantage women in the workplace (Sturm, 2001). When seemingly objective policies and practices result in differing outcomes for men and women (such as pay or promotion rates), this indicates a level of systemic bias that may be unintentionally disadvantaging one group over another (Castilla & Benard, 2010). Simple metrics, such as these unaccompanied by strategies to overcome them, can be a source of risk for organisations.

Gender based discrimination appears to be particularly salient during pregnancy. The November 2011 Pregnancy and Employment Transitions Survey (PaETS) found that 19% of women perceived some level of discrimination in the workplace while pregnant (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011), with 91% of these women saying this discrimination was directly related to pregnancy. The most common types of discrimination were missing out on promotional opportunities (34%), missing out on opportunities for training or development (32%), and inappropriate or negative comments received from managers/supervisors (23%). It is clear that this type of discrimination greatly contributes to the advancement of women in the workplace.

**2. Gender segregated industries.** Segmentation of industries as male and female dominated has been shown to influence the gender pay gap (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009). There are many industries in Australia that are easily identified as male or female dominated.

Industry segregation in Australia has been shown to account for 25% of the gender pay gap (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009). Female dominated industries, such as childcare, education, health, and community services, have historically low rates of pay, whereas male dominated industries, such as mining, engineering, and banking and finance, have the highest average pay (Broderick, 2010).

For example, the ABS reported that mining industry employees have the highest average weekly total cash earnings (\$2,469.60) in 2013, a higher than average gender pay gap of 21.7% (ABS, 2014). The representation of women in this industry quite low, at just 16.4% in 2013 (WGEA, 2013, 2014).

In contrast, the female dominated retail trade industry has the lowest average weekly total cash earnings (\$1031.80), as well as a gender pay gap lower than the average at 12.9% (ABS, 2014). We see that gender pay gaps tend to widen in male dominated industries, where the pay rates are highest.

Notwithstanding legislation designed to bring into effect wage equality (Workplace Gender Equality Act, 2012), which replaced the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act* (1999), differences in expectations of pay have been proven, with women expecting to be paid less at entry and peak career levels (Hogue, DuBois, & Fox-Cardamone, 2010). This difference in pay expectations is said to be partly due to the understanding that pay is distributed differently between male and female dominated industries, in a way that disadvantages women (Denmark, Rabinowitz, & Sechzer, 2000). Both women and men who choose male dominated roles have higher expectations of pay than those who choose female dominated roles (Hogue, DuBois, & Fox-Cardamone, 2010).

**3. Occupational segregation.** Across various industries, there are occupations that are traditionally seen to be primarily male or female roles. Those that are considered women's work are usually lower paid than those typically occupied by men (Cassells, Vidyattama, Miranti, & McNamara, 2009). However, in their 2009 analysis of Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia data, Cobb-Clarke and Tan concluded that the gender pay gap is not due to men and women working in different occupations, but because women get paid less than their male counterparts when they occupy the same roles. They explain that the gender pay gap would not be improved by women entering typically male occupations in equal proportions (Cobb-Clark & Tan, 2009).

It appears that the gender pay gap would be better addressed by access to career advancement rather than an even distribution across various occupations (Cobb-Clark & Tan, 2009). However, this advancement can be affected by the roles women occupy; for female executives it is more common to occupy a support role than a line position. In a line position an individual has profit and loss or client facing responsibilities. Examples of line positions are business heads, sales, production, executive officers, and financial officers. It is such roles that are the pipeline for rising to senior roles such as CEO (EOWA, 2012).

In Australia, 6% of line management in 2012 were female, which is relatively unchanged from 2008. In contrast, 22% of executive support roles are female, which has increased from 17% in 2008 (EOWA, 2008). These roles include legal, administration, HR, IT, communications, and other roles that support business functions. While the 2012 Census of Women in Leadership shows that it is through such roles that women can reach senior leadership levels, they are unlikely to progress any further to the c-suite or board (EOWA, 2012).

The reasons why women tend to occupy lower paid roles is not very well understood, as there is still variation amongst men and women with similar skills (Cobb-Clark & Tan, 2009). Hakim's preference theory (2002) suggests that women prefer caring roles or chose typically female industries due to female role models, male dominated roles and industries have fewer female role models that can be identified. However, this theory does not explain why women still remain under-represented at the top in industries that are predominantly female. For example, in the education and training sector, during 2013, the workforce was predominantly female (61.7%), yet the management remained male dominated (47% female) and less than a third of CEOs (29.9%) are female (WGEA, 2014).

**4. Differing workforce participation rates in Australia.** There is a trend for men to have a higher workforce participation rate than women. Australia's total labour force is 45.8% female and 54.4% male (as at June 2013). This ratio has changed very little over the past two decades, as the female labour force ratio was 42.1% in 1993 (ABS, 2014).

In Australia, it is historically more common for women to be in part-time work or not in the labour force than men (Wilkins, Warren, Hahn, & Houn, 2011). In June 2013, the overall male workforce participation rate was 72%, being much lower for women at 59% (ABS, 2014). This is also lower than the OECD average of 65% (OECD, 2012).

It is interesting to note these figures have changed only marginally in the past 20 years, with an average 52% female participation rate in 1993. It seems that two decades of movement towards gender equality in Australia has increased the female participation rate by less than eight percentage points. This may be an indication as to why Australia has fallen from 15<sup>th</sup> position in 2006 to the 25<sup>th</sup> position in 2012 on

the Global Gender Gap Index, which takes into account the economic participation and opportunity of a country (Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2009). This fall in position is most likely a consequence of improvements in other countries, while Australia has remained constant.

### **5. Greater representation of women in part-time and casual work.**

In Australia, the number of households with a single income and stay at home spouse is declining and the labour force participation rates of women have been steadily increasing (Blaxland, Mullan, & Craig, 2009).

Table A1 below illustrates that women who are in the labour force are more likely to be in part-time employment than men. As a percentage of the female labour force, 44% of women work part-time, and for Australian men, 16% of those in the workforce are employed part-time.

The percentage of female part-time employment (44%) is much higher than the 2012 OECD average of 26.4% (OECD, 2012), indicating that the rate of female part-time employment amongst the employed population of Australians is comparatively high.

Table A1:  
*Labour Force, Australia, June 2013 (ABS, 2014)*

	<b>Part-time</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>
<b>Male</b>	16.3%	78.0%	5.6%
<b>Female</b>	44.0%	50.5%	5.5%

Women accounted for 70% of all part-time employees in Australian between 2010 and 2011. The underemployment rate (wanting to work more hours) has been shown to be higher for women (9%) than men (5%), which is partly attributed to the higher rate of female part-time employment (ABS, 2012).

Part-time work is associated with slower career and pay growth, referred to as a 'part-time penalty' (Manning & Petrongolo, 2008). With the over-representation of women in these roles, they can incur reduced promotional opportunities and career plateaus (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010), as part-time roles are considered to be career limiting (O'Leary & Russell, 2012).

**5.1. The part-time career plateau.** As the statistics outlined above show, part-time employment for women and full-time employment for men is most common, indicating that women are most likely the secondary income earners in coupled heterosexual families.

Consistent with many other countries, when the total hours in paid and unpaid work are considered, men and women do not significantly differ in the hours they 'work'. Men engage in more market (paid) work and women more domestic (unpaid) work (Burda, Hamermesh, & Weil, 2013). These higher domestic workloads carried by women are reflected in their rates of part-time employment.

However, part-time jobs are rarely considered the best way to accelerate a person's career. The belief that flexible or part-time work can have a negative effect on career trajectory is one of the main reasons people choose not to use such work arrangements (O'Leary & Russell, 2012) and they are probably right, part-time roles

usually have less responsibility, are considered less challenging and are less likely to result in a promotion when compared to full-time positions (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010).

In a 2010 study of part-time managers, Tomlinson and Durbin (2010) concluded that careers were stalled when individuals moved from a full-time to part-time managerial role, despite consistent work intensity and career focus. This study showed how frustrating this lack of career growth and mobility is for the individual, resulting in a disincentive for following this part-time path. It was the conclusion of this study that part-time managers (most likely women) transition into these roles, accepting that this change would put their careers on hold, but this is considered the trade for increased work-life balance.

Further emphasising the low career growth of this work style, it has been established that part-time employment is not a transitional phase towards full-time work, as the movement from part-time to full-time employment can be challenging (Fok, Jeon, & Wilkins, 2013) and many of these employees report that they do not intend to increase their workload to full-time (Booth & van Ours, 2013). This slower career growth has also been attributed to a reduced ability for female part-time employees to network, due to time constraints (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010).

The career plateau associated with part-time work may infer an individual's lack of ambition, however the idea that individuals work less hours due to lower levels of ambition has been rejected. Women in part-time roles report the perception of not feeling adequately challenged or supported to pursue their ambitions (Peters, Bleijenbergh, & Poutsma, 2010). It has been argued that women working part-time are often perceived as less ambitious due to high levels of job satisfaction and low desire to change their hours to full-time (Booth & van Ours, 2013).

Despite agreeing that part-time work means a loss of career mobility, women who work part-time describe their ambitions to be directed towards individual development, personal growth and mastering their jobs. This indicates that although many women working part-time may accept that their career growth has stalled, this does not imply a loss of ambition, but illustrates the challenge for these women to express their ambition in a socially acceptable way (Benschop, van den Brink, Doorewaard, & Leenders, 2013).

Those who work part-time not only express ambition, but also report that they consider themselves to be very productive (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010). This high level of productivity is reaffirmed by a 2013 report by Ernst and Young (2013, p. 3), who concluded “women in flexible roles [part-time, contract or casual] appear to be the most productive members of our workforce”. It is this group that wastes on average 11.1% of their working day, as compared to an overall average of 14.5%. This productivity gain is estimated to be one and a half weeks of additional work that part-time employees can deliver per year, by using their time more wisely. These employees report that they are highly focused, work intensively and usually beyond their contracted hours, indicating that the reduction in pay and opportunity is not reciprocated by reduced workload (Tomlinson & Durbin, 2010).

Given that the differences in career growth between full-time and part-time employees cannot be explained as a function of lower productivity or ambition, this suggests the existence of discrimination associated with part-time employment (Bardasi & Gornick, 2008), which is most often occupied by women.

**5.2. Part-time pay penalty.** Associated with the career plateau of part-time work is a pay penalty in the form of slower earnings growth. Conceptually, the part-time pay penalty is different to the motherhood pay penalty (which specifically



relates to working mothers being systematically disadvantaged, as compared to childless women: see section 2.2), but it is accepted that these two functions overlap (Connolly & Gregory, 2008).

A review of the literature reveals that the pay gap between part-time and full-time employment can manifest in two ways: reduced earnings growth and lower hourly equivalent pay.

One study found that women who work part-time are not remunerated for their part-time work experience and therefore lose around 6% per year in earnings growth (Chalmers & Hill, 2007).

This pay penalty can be partly explained by human capital theory, as employees who engage in less work hours accumulate less experience over their working lives, as compared to those who consistently work full-time. However, Australian data indicates that full-time and part-time employed women are quite similar in terms of occupational tenure and work experience (Booth & Wood, 2008).

Evidence shows that the part-time pay penalty is found across the globe. A 2008 study of pay gaps between full-time and part-time employed women (Bardasi & Gornick, 2008) showed that part-time employed women in the US, UK, Canada, Italy, and Germany incurred a pay penalty (Sweden was the only exception). In this study, occupational segregation was identified as being a likely contributor to the part-time pay penalty, as the majority of part-time employed females were working in sales, clerical and service occupations, with age and education shown to not be related to this wage gap.

An analysis of the part-time pay penalty in the UK (Manning & Petrongolo, 2008) indicated that the hourly earnings for part-time employees was 25% less than full-time employees. This gap was explained by the occupational segregation of those

who work part-time and the lower wages associated with the types of roles that are done on a part-time basis.

Despite international evidence, in Australia contrary evidence has been found, with the existence of an hourly pay premium of up to 9% for working part-time (Booth & Wood, 2008). In their 2008 study of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey data, Booth and Wood concluded that this hourly premium is not due to casual loading that compensates for leave entitlements, as it appears when comparing permanent full-time and part-time employees.

Booth and Woods suggest that this may occur due to marginal tax rates or because part-time employees are very productive with their time, which means employers are willing to pay a premium. In this way, it seems that Australia is very different to the international trend of lower pay rates for part-time work, however, more robust longitudinal research is needed to gain a full understanding as to why this is the case. The larger representation of women in this group makes such a comparison challenging. The occupational clustering of these roles shows there is evidence of women paying a greater career penalty for working at senior levels.

Illustrating this in Table A2 below, the part-time pay gap is in favour of women in occupational clusters, such as ‘clerical and administrative’ and ‘community and personal service’, where average earnings are lowest, whereas a pay gap in favour of men occurs within the ‘professionals’ and ‘managers’ clusters, where the earnings are highest.

Table A2:

*Gender pay gap in mean weekly earnings in main job (part-time). Replicated from WGEA Gender Pay Gap Statistics Factsheet, Feb 2013, p. 4*

<b>Mean weekly part-time earnings in main job</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Pay Gap (%)*</b>
Technicians and trade workers	\$550	\$436	20.7
Professionals	\$870	\$766	12.0
Managers	\$852	\$784	8.0
Sales workers	\$297	\$309	-4.0

Community and personal service workers	\$410	\$427	-4.1
Labourers	\$307	\$325	-5.9
Clerical and administrative workers	\$487	\$552	-13.3
All occupations	\$455	\$496	-9.0

\*Minus sign indicates that women's earnings are higher than men's

This data show that in real terms, when the pay gap is in favour of women, they benefit very little (maximum of \$65 per week), yet when the pay gap is in favour of men, much larger benefits result (up to \$114 a week).

**6. Use of flexible work arrangements.** Part-time work is considered to be one of many Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs), however it is important to note that flexibility and part-time work are not synonymous, as part-time work can be inflexible in nature (O'Leary & Russell, 2012).

Workplace flexibility is defined as the ability of workers to make choices influencing when, where, and for how long they engage in work-related tasks (Hill et al., 2008). In this way, flexibility is about an employees' perceived ability to choose how they arrange their work and life tasks and feel in control.

The ways in which this is achieved are varied (through arrangements such as telework, reduced hours and varying start and end times) and it is not assumed that part-time work is flexible. Part-time work is a critical component of the way organisations measure the uptake of flexible work arrangements, resulting in these two concepts often being used interchangeably (Ernst & Young, 2013).

Research indicates that there is a general reluctance by men to use family-friendly work arrangements because of the (either perceived or actual) impact on their jobs, their personal identity and career progression (Bittman, Hoffman, & Thompson, 2004).

This reluctance may be justified, given the findings that fathers who experience this work-family conflict receive lower performance ratings than childless

men (Butler & Skattebo, 2004), suggesting that men are rewarded by being fathers only so long as they conform to the gender role stereotype of the breadwinner.

It is known that men do not use part-time or flexible work options as often as women (Pocock, Skinner, & Ichii, 2009; Moorehead, 2005). Business based research by Bain and Co (Coffman & Hagey, 2010) identified that a perceived barrier for using flexible work options is the fear that it is career damaging.

Men are more likely to want to work full-time, and women are twice as likely to request flexible work arrangements (Pocock, Skinner, & Ichii, 2009). In addition, higher paid men are less likely to request flexible work arrangements than lower paid men, but the patterns for women are consistent across all income levels (Coffman & Hagey, 2010). Many employees in Australia who wish to change their current work arrangements do not make use of their right to request flexible work for fear that their request will be denied and they will suffer negative repercussions, such as supervisors viewing these requests negatively (Pocock, Skinner, & Williams, 2012). Flexibility is most often thought of in terms of a women's role juggling her family and her career. It is when children are young that men spend long hours at work, due to this time period often overlapping with them establishing their careers (Bittman, Hoffman, & Thompson, 2004). The Pregnancy and Employment Transitions Survey (PaETS) found that of women in paid work with children under two years old, 84% work part-time, whereas 86% of their partners worked full-time (ABS, 2011). Of these women, 86% used some type of flexible work arrangement, whereas 26% of their partners used flexible working arrangement to assist with the care of the child/ren. Over half of the partners (52%) said that flexible work arrangements were not available or they didn't know if they were available (ABS, 2011).

A report from the Diversity Council of Australia on Men and Flexibility (O'Leary & Russell, 2012) highlights that while 79% of young fathers would prefer to choose their start and finish times, only 41% actually do. Similarly, 79% of young fathers prefer to work a compressed work week, but only 24% do. The report also indicates that 37% of young fathers have seriously considered leaving their jobs because of a lack of flexibility.

**6.1. Flexibility and senior roles.** When assessing flexible work in the context of gender equality in senior roles, there is evidence to show that senior roles are often quite inflexible by nature (Coffman & Hagey, 2010). In addition, women who occupy senior part-time roles often achieve this as a result of being highly skilled full-time employees negotiating for reduced hours (Tomlinson, 2007). This indicates that flexible senior roles are rarely proactively created and recruited for, creating a barrier for women advancing into these positions.

It has been reported (Coffman & Hagey, 2010) that only a small number of males in senior roles engage in flexible work arrangements in a meaningful way, thus signifying to others that successful careers and flexible work cannot coexist. Despite this, having the flexibility to manage their family/personal life was in the top five job characteristics for all men, while for younger fathers it was the third most highly valued job characteristic (O'Leary & Russell, 2012).

The fairly even proportions of men and women at graduate level (Sanders, Zehner, Fagg, & Hellicar, 2013) are reflected by similar distribution across staff and line roles in early careers (Barsh, Devillard, & Wang, 2012). However, these patterns shift as careers progress, with women more likely to move away from line roles that have more time pressures and less flexibility, but lead to senior level positions (Barsh, Devillard, & Wang, 2012).

This 'pipeline challenge' (Davies, 2011) of having women progress through each level of the organisation is illustrated by industry research that shows women are three times more likely to opt out of careers with highly stressful jobs than men (Coffman & Hagey, 2010). This tends to occur at the age where managers begin to take on more senior roles and this loss of talent can have a very negative effect on organisational performance (Davies, 2011; Coffman & Hagey, 2010).

If women are happy with the balance they have in their current positions, want control over the demands on their time and do not want a position that results in higher work intensity, they will be unwilling to pursue promotion to a senior role (Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2004).

Bourke and Andrews (2011) argue that job design is a critical driver for gender equality in senior roles, with job redesign being used to identify aspects of a role that can serve to disadvantage women. For example, the combination of senior roles being typically full-time and inflexible, the career penalties associated with part-time work, and the majority of caring and domestic responsibilities being held by women, created barriers for women to be available for these roles (Chesterman et al, 2004).

Certain aspects, such as the amount of flexibility that can be incorporated into a role, can be evaluated in a way that redesigns roles to remove features that disadvantage those with caring responsibilities.

**7. Negotiation styles.** Women may be paid less than their male counterparts due to lower pay expectations at both entry level and peak-career level (Hogue, DuBois, & Fox-Cardamone, 2010). In addition, women are not as successful as men when it comes to negotiating for pay advancement, as they are reluctant to engage in self-promoting behaviours (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010).

According to the backlash avoidance model (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010), self-promotion behaviour in women is seen as going against the expectations of feminine behaviour as it requires them to focus on themselves rather than others. The fear of negative response to this behaviour ensures that women are not able to engage in the self-promotion activities necessary for career success as freely as their male counterparts. Negotiation is considered a masculine behaviour (Genat, Wood, & Sojo, 2012), which leads to women being reluctant to use these skills to avoid the negative judgments of others, which alone can act as a detriment to the success of their self-promotion (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010). Women who act outside of their gender stereotype by negotiating are judged as having poor social skills (Rudman & Phelan, 2008), which results in being disliked, undesirable to work with (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004) as well as not suitable to hire or promote (Rudman & Phelan, 2008). These negative consequences mean that women are less likely to initiate negotiation and therefore avoid these interpersonal penalties.

However, women do not lack the skills to promote themselves successfully. When negotiating on behalf of others, such as engaging in the feminine behaviour of helping, women negotiate harder, give in less, and get better results than if they were negotiating for themselves (Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Amanatullah & Morris, 2010).

With popular literature that is intended to empower women and increase their confidence, such as *Lean In* by Sheryl Sandberg (2013), becoming more widely read, there is considerable discussion around 'reticence', the pattern of behaviour where women undervalue their own skills, require encouragement before seeking more senior roles, to not apply for promotions without endorsement, and overvalue the

qualifications of their colleagues (Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2004). Despite the arguments that men and women differ in their self-promotion behaviour, researchers (Desvaux, Devillard, & Sancier-Sultan, 2010; Chesterman, Ross-Smith, & Peters, 2004; Catalyst Information Centre, 2011) explain that the idea of men progressing because they are 'doing all the right things', such as being proactive in seeking career advancement opportunities, is untrue. There is no evidence to show that women are less likely than men to engage in these advancement strategies.

It seems that when using the same proactive career advancement strategies, men benefit more from them. The Catalyst Information Centre (2011) explained that men engaging in 'ideal worker behaviours' advance their careers further and faster than those who do not. For women using these same strategies, their advancement is only slightly higher than not doing anything. It was also found that men's pay grew faster than women's, no matter which career advancement strategy they used. Supporting this, a meta-analysis of gender and negotiations (Walters, Stuhlmacher, & Mayer, 1998) found that women are no less competitive than men in negotiations done without direct contact, but women are less effective in a face-to-face situation.

**8. Social identity, gender stereotypes and bias.** Social identity is described as a person knowing that they belong to a certain social group, of which their membership holds emotional significance or value (Haslam, 2004). It is this internalised group membership that gives a person a sense of who they are: a sense of identity. By valuing their group membership and gaining increased self-esteem from this identity, those who are similarly grouped are valued positively, seeing themselves as better than others not in the group (Haslam, 2004).



By using social identities, groups of people can gain a collective sense of identity, a set of norms, work towards common goals, develop a sense of trust and liking for others in the group, and therefore build self-esteem.

However, this develops a unique set of rules or boundaries that provide a barrier to those who wish to enter the group. In addition, group members tend to stereotype those who are outside the group (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004) and choose higher rewards for those within their group (Tajfel, 1978).

Women have been long-standing outsiders of powerful business groups, as there is high social identification with women in caring roles, with them having lower levels of power in male dominated spheres of work (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004). For example, when it comes to performance assessment, higher ratings will be given to those within the same group, as compared to the out-group. When gender is the basis of this group identity, women will have to work much harder and have higher performance levels to be considered successful, and men will challenge new women more than they would challenge new men. This is emphasised by the findings that male directors prefer candidates that share similar features to themselves (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2004).

The work culture of senior level roles is often very masculine. A 2002 study by van Vianen and Fisher illustrated that the everyday practices, communication styles, leadership examples, rewarded behaviour, and definitions of success in these top jobs can fit a very typical male stereotype. It was concluded in this study that women find these work environments unattractive. In these situations women are not just victims of exclusion, as they do not aspire to these roles (van Vianen & Fischer, 2002).

When a male dominated organisation has few women in senior roles, men exaggerate their male characteristics. In addition, women who do behave in a typically masculine way are considered to be aggressive, disliked by both genders, leaving them isolated as outsiders of both men and women (Catalyst, 2007).

These biases may be a result of judgments made on the basis of how a person should behave and how they do behave (Rudman & Glick, 2001), which may result in poorer performance assessments for women in leadership roles. Any variation in performance assessment as a result of gender bias can provide a barrier to career advancement, as well as a pay gap if performance is linked to remuneration, such as bonuses. For example, a British study (Booth, Francesconi, & Frank, 2003) reported that women were equally likely to get a promotion, but received smaller pay increases from those promotions.

Stereotypes and bias have implications for the judgment of competence for women in the workforce and how women are judged as leaders.

**9. Leadership stereotypes & bias.** Gender perceptions of leadership were explored in meta-analysis by Koenig, Eagly, Mitchel and Ristikari (2011), identifying three paradigms in which leadership is typically stereotyped as masculine: 1) Think-Manager – Think-Male, indicating that male descriptors correlate highly with manager descriptors; 2) the Agency – Communion paradigm, where agentic characteristics are linked to leadership constructs; and 3) the assessment of the masculine-feminine content of leadership stereotypes.

When we think about leaders, we think about men (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011; Schein, 2001). There is an overlap in the adjectives and descriptive terms characteristic of both men and managers. There are very few common terms that are used to describe both women and managers (Schein, 2001). This means that

women are typically seen as not fitting the expectations of what it means to be a successful leader.

Women seeking or occupying leadership roles will have to work against the stereotype that to be a good leader, one has to have masculine traits (Catalyst, 2007). Being female means that women are held to different standards and they have to overcome barriers that men do not face. In typical male occupations and in senior roles (that are typically held by men), these stereotypes become most problematic (Catalyst, 2007).

Support for a binary masculine/feminine paradigm is lacking, as plotting masculinity and femininity on a single dimension assumes that these are oppositional to one another, i.e., one is lacking where the other is abundant. Theorists, such as Bem (1974), have shown that both masculine and feminine characteristics can co-exist, therefore a single dimension paradigm is not useful.

The schema surrounding the 'natural leader' unconsciously steers our understanding of leadership as favourable towards men and biased against women (Heilman, 2001). Men and women are thought to typically differ on certain traits, such that men are considered to be more agentic (achievement-orientated) and women more communal (social/service orientated) (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Not only do our perceptions of men and women differ, but they are considered to be oppositional, with gender balances where another is lacking (Rudman & Glick, 2001).

If men are considered to be the 'natural' leaders and women are perceived to be the opposite of men, female leaders will be considered 'atypical'. In this way, they are seen to be working against their natural tendencies if they are to be a good leader (Catalyst, 2007).

It has been argued that our stereotypes of leadership are changing over time, with a growing awareness of transformational leadership being an effective and feminine leadership style. Transformational leadership is defined in relational terms, such as good communication, encouraging others, understanding the needs of followers, and providing support (Bass & Avolio, 1997). The growing awareness of this style of leadership as being effective, while being a typically feminine style, indicates that women may have a leadership advantage in some situations (Eagly & Carli, 2003). However, it has been argued that this can lead to women being considered more suitable than men in roles associated with crisis, leading to increased risk of failure (Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011), otherwise known as the 'glass cliff' phenomenon (Ryan & Haslam, 2005).

**10. Competence and performance assessment.** The Think-Manager, Think-Male paradigm explored above illustrates how the incongruence between femininity and leadership can impact perceptions of competence for female leaders. When we describe a good leader as being tough, assertive, ambitious, strong, competitive, and competent, we are describing an agentic (male) leader (Kulich, Ryan, & Haslam, 2007). Communal terms, such as expressive, empathic, kind and understanding, would be a complementary description of a woman, but not the way a good leader would be described (Heilman, 2001). In this way, a 'good' woman cannot simultaneously be viewed as a 'good' leader.

People's perceptions of leadership are based around masculine descriptors; women who take on these roles are devalued due to their lack of femininity. As a result of not fitting the masculine stereotype, senior women's performance will be perceived as poorer, they are considered less influential, their work can go

unacknowledged, and their achievements are more likely to be linked with external events (Kulich, Ryan, & Haslam, 2007).

A study by Catalyst (Warren, 2009) supports this argument for bias in the conceptualisation of competence of female leaders, as talent management systems are particularly susceptible to gender bias. The results of this study found that:

1. Being dominated by men, senior leadership teams influence talent management systems and implementation;
2. Leadership competencies are stereotypically masculine, embedding gender bias into talent management systems and documents;
3. Organisations usually do not consider the possibilities of gender bias in succession planning, reward systems, career opportunities and competency frameworks;
4. Only 21% of the organisations surveyed provided training on how to avoid bias.

Based on research, we know that men and women are perceived quite differently as leaders and this can affect their evaluations of competence (Heilman, 2001). Specifically:

- When it comes to important work dimensions, such as performance, problem solving and leadership ability, women are consistently evaluated more negatively than men. Both genders are more likely to express positive attitudes towards male than female supervisors (Catalyst, 2007).
- Men are consistently rated as more competent than women at work (Ridgeway, 2001).
- Women are held to a higher standard of performance to prove their ability (Biernat & Fuegen, 2001) and face lower rewards than men (Catalyst, 2007).
- Women who act assertively are disliked, perceived as untrustworthy, and achieve less influence than men. Similarly, self-promoting behaviour has positive outcomes for men, but not for women (Ridgeway, 2001; Carter & Silva, 2011).

Given that gender stereotypes result in women not being considered as competent as men in the workplace and that competence is often linked to pay (Berger & Webster, 2006), there is a clear association between general gender bias and the gender pay gap.

When this bias impacts systemic processes, such as development, competencies and performance criteria, they can unintentionally act as barriers for women in the workplace at all career levels, such as initial appointment, access to training, career development opportunities, and pay (Castilla, 2011).

A publication by Catalyst (Carter & Silva, 2011) reported on a longitudinal study of 4000 male and female MBA graduates. The findings show that despite similar levels of MBA attainment, women did not advance as fast or as high as their male counterparts. Men started in higher positions post-graduation, were more likely to be given more responsibility in their first assignment, have a higher rate of pay, and advance in their careers faster. Women meanwhile did not and never caught up to their male counterparts at any stage.

In this study, the researchers accounted for a few factors and found that the idea of there being a gender difference in career ambition did not hold, as the pattern held true in groups where both men and women aspired to CEO level. These findings were consistent when years of experience, industry and region were held constant and that this was not a result of differing impact of parenthood, as the patterns were the same for men and women without children.

**11. Why the gap exists: a summary.** The causes of the gender pay gap and imbalance in leadership roles can be partially explained by the factors explored in Chapter One. The gender segregation of industries and occupations, differences in workforce participation, greater female representation in casual and part-time work,

access to flexible work arrangements, gender stereotypes, and gender bias in the workplace are all shown to be contributing factors. Much of this literature indicates a common theme that was explored in Chapter Two: the differing impact of parenthood on men and women.

## **Appendix C: Focus Group Data**

### **Group one: Mothers in paid employment**

#### **1. What were your reasons for returning?**

Financial reasons were cited as important, but the group agreed that it is far more than just the money that got them back to work. Some went back because the missed it.

“Because I loved my job. I have invested a lot into the role. I couldn't watch someone else do it. I have spent a lot of time and effort building my career and reputation.” Olivia.

One woman had left her previous role to start up her own business.

#### **2. What did you do to make it work?**

All six women expressed a preference for returning to work part-time. Three out of the six women were told by their employers that it was full-time or nothing – as a result one left to start her own business, another returned but soon resigned and the other had her husband reduce his work hours as a result.

The women in this group used a combination of formal childcare and grandparents to look after their children.

#### **3. Did you have access to maternity leave? Did this affect your decision to go back when you did?**

All women had access to either paid or unpaid leave with their first child, but it became less common with subsequent children. There was a difference noticed between those in public and private industries. The majority agreed that access to maternity leave did make an impact on their decision to return and if so, when. It was raised that taking more than 12 months was not ideal for returning to your old role, as too many things would have changed.



4. If you were to take money out of the equation, would you have gone back to work when you did?

Money was not a factor for four of the participants. In those cases, it was more about maintaining a professional reputation, keeping up-to-date and maintaining networks. In terms of financial gain, an emphasis was expressed about future career options and growth, but not immediate financial gain. Concerns were raised about future career progression and earning potential diminishing if you are out of it for too long.

5. What are the biggest issues you faced when going back to work?
  - When children are sick. This was the biggest issue highlighted, with unanimous agreement.
  - Lack of available part-time work.
  - Inflexible attitudes in the workplace.
  - Lack of understanding as to how difficult the juggling act can be by others at work.
  - Both partners working part-time are ideal, but in reality it is very rare.
  - Lack of family support is very isolating/difficult.
  - Feeling judged by others for not staying at home with your children.
6. How much contact did you have with work while on leave? What would be best when it comes to reintegrating back to work

Four participants agreed that maintaining contact while on leave made reintegration easier; however, they were quick to distinguish the difference between necessary contact and inappropriate contact. Ideally, this contact would be initiated by the mother if she felt she needed to stay up-to-date with work issues.

7. How has your relationship with your job changed since becoming a mum?

Many explained that the priority of your career can shift, but this is probably just temporary while the children are young. It was stated that the children come

first, even though passion for work continues or even increases. It was agreed that decisions about the future was not just about them anymore, but now also about the kids' future too.

8. Anything in particular that triggers stress or anxiety when it comes to balancing work and family?

Working from home can cause some conflicts with spouse. A lot depends on how understanding their partner is and how accepting they are of shared responsibilities (e.g. if mother is sick/at a workshop, then partner may need to take the day off). Another source of stress or anxiety is the feeling of being judged by others as being more committed to work than the children. They explained that this is in no way true, as the children always come first, but people can make stereotyped assumptions.

9. How important is having a support network? What do you rely on them for?

Most participants saw childcare as their main source of support, emphasising that it needs to be close to home to be more time efficient. Two of the participants rely on grandparents for childcare or when the children get sick. One participant added that having a mentor who was five years ahead in their family plan helped.

10. What family friendly HR practices are available to you or your partner? What practices would make your life easier?

One participant was from a public sector role and had options to work from home, accept part-time work, express breastmilk, and had onsite childcare. Another participant from a large private organisation had onsite childcare available at her workplace, but did not use it due to poor quality and long waiting lists. Working from home was not seen as a great option, as the children still need to be cared for. One participant came from an organisation where no-one else had children and her

options were very limited, so she resigned and started her own business. It was unanimously agreed that it is much easier when you work with people who have kids or experience with a workplace with a lot of families.

11. What would make your current situation better?

They found that going back to a part-time role often meant they were doing undesirable work or expected to maintain a full workload while only working part-time. What they expressed was that being part-time does not mean you are not ambitious and capable, so getting dull tasks are demeaning. They would find things easier if people understood that working part-time does not mean they are less committed to their jobs or careers.

In addition, many were expected to still do what they did before full-time, but just do it in a part-time capacity – their pay gets cut but they are expected to deliver the same results.

All but one participant expressed this opinion, as she agreed that she was in fact less committed and ambitious than she was before children, so those assumptions were correct in her case.

The participants also expressed a desire to have the same parental commitments and gratuities extended to fathers.

## **Group Two: Full-time mothers**

### **1. Why didn't you go back to work?**

- “I don't have a job to go back to” – retrenched during maternity leave. Sienna.
- Left previous role due to sickness during pregnancy – no job to go back to.
- Wanted to spend time with child due to difficulty conceiving and there was no financial pressure to go back. “Might have gone back if I had a fantastic job to go back to”.
- Had concerns about leaving her child in care. “I said to husband ‘I'm worried about going back to work’, and he agreed that I should stay home”.
- Going back would have meant accepting a large demotion.
- “My children are my priority – I didn't want someone else bringing up my children” – despite great job. Ashleigh.

### **2. Did you have access to maternity leave?**

Two out of the six participants did not have access to leave; one had resigned during pregnancy and the other was made redundant. Two had access to unpaid leave and two had both paid and unpaid leave.

### **3. What factors weighed most heavily in you choosing to stay at home?**

One participant expressed that initially thought childcare a fantastic idea, but as child grew, her mind changed.

“My children are my priority – I didn't want someone else bringing up my children. I'm just having too much fun. If in five years time I look back and I've damaged my career, I can live with that. If in five years time I look back and I've affected my children... I couldn't live with that” Ashleigh.

One participant expressed that she never felt the need to prove self through career, as she was comfortable with who she was without that. Another explained that she was totally prepared to give up her career in order to be at home with her children.

Some do miss their jobs, mostly because of the adult interaction.

4. Are you out of the workforce by choice?

All six participants agreed that yes, they had chosen to not re-enter the workforce. One participant explained that she was at home by choice because the challenges she had faced trying to return to study or work had been too great.

5. Do you plan on returning? When? In what capacity?

There was a lot of uncertainty when this topic was raised. Who was going to take care of the housework if they did? How do working mums manage to do everything? "I'm in awe of mothers who manage it" [working and parenting]. Louise.

Maybe when the children were older and a bit more independent, but it would have to be part-time. There were questions of how even to find a part-time job. One mother explained that due to her and her partner's age (older), she had no plans to ever return to work.

6. What would an employer need to offer in order to make it worthwhile?

- Flexible hours: particularly 9:30 to 2:30.
- The employer's attitude towards working mothers was raised as an important issue. They would preferably only work for someone who has children, as only parents could understand.
- Competitive, male dominated work environments were said to be unattractive.
- Travel was seen as a disincentive.
- They expressed the desire to not be given the menial tasks because of part-time status and to be paid what they are worth.

7. What about finances? How have you managed on one income?

The majority had a partner who could support the family. In addition, they mentioned making cost-cuts that were a reasonable price to pay for having a mother

at home full-time. One participant had moved in with her partner's parents due to financial strain.

8. If you were to describe yourself to a stranger, would you describe yourself as a mum or as your career title most predominantly? Is your identity as tied to your job as it was before you had kids?

Many participants had made the active choice to tell people "I'm a full-time mum", as opposed to "I'm just a mum".

Despite the loss of their jobs and that part of their lives, most had embraced the idea of motherhood as identity.

One participant had an unplanned pregnancy, which was a shock – it took her long time to adjust to not following her career plan. She finds it hard to think of self as a mum. She was very career focussed before, but gave up demanding opportunities for parenthood.

In contrast, one participant experienced eight cycles of IVF, so when she got pregnant it was easy to focus on children.

9. How important is having a support network? What do you rely on them for?
  - "We moved back in with his parents when my partner lost his job. We'll probably move out when our income returns." Michaela
  - "My husband was really supportive of my decision to not go back. That really helped a lot." Ashleigh
  - For three participants, they explained that they don't have extended family to leave child with, so they felt they had to stay at home and care.
  - There was a clear dichotomy in the group, with those who had grandparents that were not trustworthy enough for childcare and others who were very supportive.

## **Appendix D: Work & Babies Study 1, Case Studies**

Four women from the focus groups were identified for follow-up interviews to create case studies that illustrated their experiences.

### **Working mother case study one: Sally\***

Sally was a 32-year-old manager in the insurance industry. She had held her management position for five years, and in that time it had gone from managing a team of 80 to a team of 120. Sally was engaged to be married and intended to begin a family straight away. With the increasing stress and demands of her management role, she decided to step down and take on a position of a technician. She was concerned that the increasing stress of her management role would impact her fertility and she may not fall pregnant. Adding to this decision was the knowledge that her husband had a strong career and she wanted a role that was compatible with a good family balance. Within two months of standing down from her management role, Sally was married and pregnant with her first child. She continued in this role for 10 months before she left on maternity leave.

When Sally's first child was 12 months old, she returned to her technician role three days per week. Just over one year later, Sally had another child and took 18 months maternity leave. In both cases, she was able to take up to two years, but she returned sooner, when she felt ready to do so. At first, she was uneasy about leaving her second child in care, as she felt that his temperament meant that he would not adapt well to childcare. After a few weeks she says that he had settled well and she had made the right decision to go back to work. She attributes the emotional challenges to be mostly hers, as she does not plan to have any more children and it was hard for her to accept that her baby had grown up so fast.

She now works three days per week in the same role and says that she has a good balance between work and family life. She went back to work with the same department, but a different team and is not in charge of any incumbents, “I can’t exactly expect my team to work long hours and show commitment if I am the one running out the door on time everyday to do childcare pick-ups”. She is happy with her work arrangements, as she has continued in a role that is familiar, flexible and does not have management pressures impacting her family life. Sally explains that she has no intention of ever working more than three days per week – she is a mother and although her children’s needs will change, she still needs to be available to take care of her family. She does not express the need to drive her career, as she does not feel she is a natural born leader. Having a secure role that is flexible fulfils her needs perfectly. With her husband’s strong career trajectory, Sally does not see the point of having both parents putting so much emphasis on their work lives. She acknowledges that one day her children will be grown and no longer need her so much and she thinks that she will pursue an interest, such as nutrition or psychology.



**Working mum case study two: Mathilda\***

Mathilda is a 37-year-old mother of three who decided to start her own business after the birth of her first child six years ago. At the age of 30, she was pregnant and working full-time in the marketing industry. She had witnessed negative attitudes of her employers towards employees with families and their unsupportive view of flexible work arrangements, so she decided that she did not have a future with the business and resigned after 10 months of maternity leave.

At the time, a friend of hers had invented a product that Mathilda was using. Impressed with the design and seeing its potential, Mathilda invested her savings into establishing a business manufacturing her friend's invention. Six years and two more children later, Mathilda and her business partner now manufacture overseas and import their products for distribution throughout Australia and internationally. They have added many more products and design to their range and employ 10 people to help run the business and a busy warehouse. After the birth of her third child, Mathilda was working right up until the birth of her child and was back taking care of the business straight away. She works from her home office and says she does not have the option of taking maternity leave. She does however have ultimate flexibility in her role, as she is not accountable to an employer. She works very long hours and re-invests the company profits back into growing the business.

Mathilda considers herself to be an entrepreneur and says she could not imagine ever going back to work for someone else ever again.

**Full-time mother case study one: Sienna\***

Sienna is a mid-level management professional in the IT industry. At age 34 and pregnant with her first child, Sienna was made redundant when 32 weeks pregnant. She says that this worked out really well for her as she got a redundancy package just before she was due to go on maternity leave. However, had she been entitled to maternity leave she would have returned to her role after approximately 12 months. When her first child was 15 months old, she put him in care and began to look for a new job. It was at this time she fell pregnant again. She thought that she would struggle to find a job being pregnant and that it would be physically difficult being pregnant in a new role with a toddler at home. Because of the cost of care, Sienna pulled her first child out of care and became a full-time mother again. Sienna has not worked since the birth of her first child (just over four years) and is currently searching for a full-time role that can progress her career.

She has multiple reasons for wanting to re-enter the workforce. Financially, she wants a better quality of life, a secure future for her children, and to make up for the financial sacrifices they have made. She also feels it is time for her own personal development after giving to others for four years. Most importantly, she wants a career that she loves. Sienna explains that her maturity, skills and experience means she has a lot to offer.

In her previous role, the redundancy package meant that Sienna was given access to outplacement services and career guidance, which she has recently utilised.

Once Sienna's youngest was two years old, and settled into a stable childcare arrangement and set about updating her skills in preparation for her new job search. She completed vocational training and began looking for part-time roles. After a few

months, Sienna decided that to be competitive in the job market, she would need to start offering herself as a full-time employee.

Sienna says that it has been challenging to re-enter the workforce, as employers ask what she has been doing for the last few years and the conversation inevitably turns to motherhood. She feels that when an employer has the choice between her and a male, she does not get the job. She feels as though she has had a lot of her time wasted by employment agencies that do not have a role that immediately needs filling.

Due to these challenges and the high cost of childcare, Sienna's plan of re-entering the workforce is in danger of failing. On just her husbands' wage, they cannot afford the high cost of childcare without a second income to support it. This means that Sienna runs the risk of delaying job searches until her oldest starts school (another 12 months), or she will be forced to accept a role that she is not suited to.

**Full-time mum case study two: Michaela\***

Michaela was a 25-year-old professional who was working hard towards her career goals within a large government agency. She had achieved great success in her time in the organisation and was acting in a team leader role while the organisation was restructuring. The role that she had been working in for six months had not been made official, but it had been agreed that she would formally take on this role very soon. During this time, Michaela fell pregnant, which was a surprise to her and her colleagues. She found herself feeling unwell throughout the pregnancy and often had to take time off due to illness. Because of this, she was demoted back to her previous role, which also resulted in even less responsibilities than she had previously. Having health challenges during her pregnancy, Michaela found it hard to work at the pace she normally did and was demoralised by her demotion, so she chose to resign.

It took Michaela a long time to adjust to the fact that her career was not going according to plan. It was this experience that triggered the move into her partner's parent's house and her partner taking on a Masters degree. He aimed to finish this degree as soon as possible to get a better job and support his family as well as possible. 18 months after the birth, Michaela followed her dream of becoming a doctor and applied to medical school. Her application was successful and her partner had returned to work, so she started the degree.

She soon discovered that a medical degree was tough, requiring long hours and a big commitment to study and training. Living off her partner's wage made the cost of childcare a large burden. She asked the University for part time candidature, her request was rejected. Michaela withdrew from her medical studies and began to reassess her options.

Due to financial pressure, Michaela and her family relocated to follow her partner's job offer and decrease some of the costs of living. Michaela has since been able to enrol in teacher training part-time and is now hoping to grow her teaching career. She does not plan to have any more children.

\*Note: Actual names of the participants have been changed to ensure anonymity.

## Appendix E: Work and Babies Study Two. Survey items

### Demographics

- Age
- Gender
- Country you live in
- Do you have any children? (Yes/No)
- Children's dates of birth
- Marital status
- Did you ever work while pregnant? (Yes/No tick box for each child)
- If yes, are you currently on maternity leave?
- If yes, will you go back to your old job when your maternity leave ends?
- Did you have access to maternity leave? (Yes/No tick box for each child)
  - If yes, paid, unpaid or both?
  - How long was your paid maternity leave?
  - How long was your unpaid maternity leave?
  - If no, in regards to not having access to maternity leave, which best describes your situation?
    - I left my job when pregnant
    - My job ended when I left to have my baby
    - I was not eligible for maternity leave entitlements
    - I did not take my maternity leave
    - I work for myself, so maternity leave is irrelevant
    - Other
- Did you go back to work after having your children? (Yes/No tick box for each child)
  - If yes, how old were your children when you returned to work? (text box for each child)
- How many hours do you now work outside the home per week?
  - Full-time (35+ hours per week)
  - Part-time (0–34 hours per week)
  - None – I am a full-time homemaker

- None – I am a student
- If full-time or part-time, when it comes to balancing work and motherhood right now, please indicate your preference
  - To not work outside the home at all
  - To work less hours if I could
  - To work more hours if I could
  - I have the right balance
- If student or homemaker, when it comes to balancing work and motherhood right now, please indicate your preference
  - To just work and have no childrearing responsibilities
  - To work full-time if I could
  - To work some hours if I could
  - To not work outside the home at all
- What industry do you normally work in?
- How long have you been with your most recent employer?
  - Less than 1 year
  - 1–2 years
  - 2–3 years
  - 3–5 years
  - 5–7 years
  - 7–10 years
  - 10–15 years
  - 15+ years
  - I have never been employed
- Approximately how many staff work in the organisation?
  - Up to 19
  - 20 to 99
  - 100+
- What is your full-time (or equivalent) salary range in this role?
  - \$0
  - \$1–\$6,000
  - \$6,001–\$20,000
  - \$20,001–\$34,000

- \$34,001–\$57,000
- \$57,001–\$80,000
- \$80,001–\$100,000
- \$100,001–\$180,000
- \$180,000+
- If full-time or part-time, why did you return to work? (Tick any that apply)<sup>1</sup>
  - My maternity leave term ended
  - I had work pressures and responsibilities to attend to
  - I could lose my job
  - Childcare options became available
  - My partner is the primary carer
  - My boss wanted me back ASAP
  - Pressure on family income
  - To maintain financial independence
  - Because I said I would
  - I miss the action of work
  - To progress my career
  - I don't want to lose what I have worked so hard to achieve
  - Staying at home full-time is not for me
  - I felt ready to go back to work
  - I crave companionship that is adult and child free
  - I think my child is better off with me working
  - My child reached a stage where they were happy to be in care so I went back to work
  - Other
- If homemaker or student, why have you not returned to work? (Tick any that apply)<sup>2</sup>
  - Having children makes working too difficult
  - Being at home right now is more important than a job

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a review of other studies and consultation in the focus groups (Work and Babies Stage One a list of reasons for returning to work, or not returning to work was collated.

<sup>2</sup> Based on a review of other studies and consultation in the focus groups (Work and Babies Stage One), a list of reasons for returning to work, or not returning to work was collated.



- I couldn't handle the demands of my job on top of the demands of motherhood
- I want to/or have had another baby
- I don't want my child to be in daycare until they are more independent
- I haven't been able to find suitable work
- I am currently or planning to study
- My partner would prefer me to be at home
- I believe a mother's role is in the home
- I can't expect my colleagues to work long hours while I run out the door on time everyday
- The industry I work in is not suitable for working mums
- I'm considering a career change
- I've decided to work for myself
- I don't want to miss out on watching my children grow up
- The cost of childcare makes going to work pointless
- I don't think I would be capable of working the same way I used to
- We prepared ourselves financially so that I don't have to rush back to work
- I'm having too much fun
- I am on maternity leave right now
- Other

## **Scales**

### **Role complexity**

In relation to your profession, please read each of the following statements and tick the box that best reflects your opinion [1: **Strongly disagree** 2: **Disagree** 3: **Neither agree or disagree** 4: **Agree** 5: **Strongly agree**]

- My job is very complex
- My job requires a lot of skill
- My job is such that it takes a long time to learn the skills required to do the job well

### **2. Experience of motherhood (EMQ)**

Having a child can bring about changes in the lives of women. Please read the following statements that have been used to describe feelings about mothering and click the statement that best describes your general attitudes.

There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement. [1: Not at all 2: Somewhat 3: Moderately so 4: Very much so]

- I feel relaxed whenever I think about the child
- I find the trouble of arranging a babysitter takes away the pleasure of going out
- I need a break from the demands of the child
- I have easy access to transport when I go out with the child
- I am concerned about the child's progress
- I enjoy mealtimes with the child
- I have time to pursue my own interests
- I find relatives undermine my confidence in looking after the baby
- I have enjoyed sex since the baby was born
- I feel cut off from my friends
- I like my life just as it is
- I get so much different advice it is hard to know what is best for the baby
- I feel anxious whenever I remember the baby's start in life
- I am coping with the stresses of parenthood
- I wish those close to me would share the work of baby care with me
- I have greater confidence since I became a mother
- I have little to talk about besides the baby
- I feel run down
- I have an active social life
- I feel great fulfilment in looking after the baby

### **Social support.**

Measured by the Social Support Questionnaire (Sarason, Henry, Basham, & Sarason; 1983)

The following questions ask about people in your environment who provide you with help or support. Each question has two parts. For the first part list all the people you know, excluding yourself, whom you can count on for support in the manner described. Give the person's relationship to you (see example). Do not list more than one person next to each of the numbers beneath the question.

For the second part, tick how satisfied you are with the overall support you have.

If you have no support for that question, tick 'no one' but still rate your level of satisfaction. Do not list more than nine people per question.

Please answer all questions as best you can.

*Example: Who do you know whom you can trust with information that could get you into trouble?*

*1) Brother / Sister*

*2) Friend (AB)*

*3) Friend (DH)*

*4) Father*

*5) employer*

*6)*

*7)*

*8)*

*9)*

*How satisfied are you with this support?*

1. very dissatisfied
2. fairly dissatisfied
3. a little dissatisfied

4. a little satisfied
5. fairly satisfied
6. very satisfied

Who can you really count on to be dependable when you need help?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)

How satisfied are you with this support?

1. very dissatisfied
2. fairly dissatisfied
3. a little dissatisfied
4. a little satisfied
5. fairly satisfied
6. very satisfied

Who can you really count on to help you feel more relaxed when you are under pressure?

- 1)
- 2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

How satisfied are you with this support?

1. very dissatisfied
2. fairly dissatisfied
3. a little dissatisfied
4. a little satisfied
5. fairly satisfied
6. very satisfied

Who accepts you totally, including both your worst and best points?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

How satisfied are you with this support?

1. very dissatisfied
2. fairly dissatisfied
3. a little dissatisfied
4. a little satisfied
5. fairly satisfied
6. very satisfied

Who can you really count on to care about you, regardless of what is happening to you?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)

How satisfied are you with this support?

1. very dissatisfied
2. fairly dissatisfied
3. a little dissatisfied
4. a little satisfied
5. fairly satisfied
6. very satisfied

Who can you really count on to help you feel better when you are generally down-in-the-dumps?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)

How satisfied are you with this support?

1. very dissatisfied
2. fairly dissatisfied
3. a little dissatisfied
4. a little satisfied
5. fairly satisfied
6. very satisfied

Who can you count on to console you when you are very upset?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

How satisfied are you with this support?

1. very dissatisfied
2. fairly dissatisfied
3. a little dissatisfied
4. a little satisfied
5. fairly satisfied
6. very satisfied

#### 4. Organisational commitment.

Measured by the Affective Commitment Scale (ACS), Continuance Commitment Scale (CCS) and Normative Commitment Scale (NCS) (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Changes were made to the items for participants who are not currently employed to report their commitment relating to their previous role (changes in bold).

[1: Strongly disagree 2: Moderately disagree 3: Slightly disagree 4: Neither agree or disagree 5 : Slightly agree 6: Moderately disagree 7: Strongly agree]

Employed	Not employed
<b>Affective commitment</b>	
I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation	I would <b>have been</b> happy to spend the rest of my career with the organisation
I enjoy discussing my	



<p>organisation with people outside it</p> <p>I really feel as if this organisation's problems are my own</p> <p>I think that I could easily become attached to another organisation as I am to this one</p> <p>I do not feel like I am 'part of the family' at my organisation</p> <p>I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organisation</p> <p>This organisation has a great deal of personal meaning to me</p> <p>I do not feel a sense of belonging to my organisation</p>	<p>I enjoyed discussing the organisation with people outside it</p> <p>I really <b>felt</b> as if the organisation's problems <b>were</b> my own</p> <p>I think that I could easily become attached to another organisation as I <b>was to that one</b></p> <p>I <b>did</b> not feel like I <b>was</b> 'part of <b>the</b> family' at the organisation</p> <p>I <b>did</b> not feel 'emotionally attached' to <b>the</b> organisation</p> <p><b>The</b> organisation <b>had</b> a great deal of personal meaning to me</p> <p>I <b>did</b> not feel a sense of belonging to <b>the</b> organisation</p>
<b>Continuance commitment:</b>	
<p>I am not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up</p> <p>It would be very hard for me to leave my organisation right now, even if I wanted to</p> <p>Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now</p>	<p>I <b>was</b> not afraid of what might happen if I quit my job without having another one lined up</p> <p>It would <b>have been</b> very hard for me to leave the organisation <b>when I was working there</b>, even if I wanted to</p> <p>Too much in my life would <b>have been</b> disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave <b>the</b> organisation for another</p>

<p>It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organisation now</p> <p>Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire</p> <p>I feel I have too few options to consider leaving this organisation</p> <p>One of the few serious consequences of leaving this organisation would be the scarcity of available alternatives</p> <p>One of the major reasons I continue to work for this organisation is that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice, another organisation may not match the overall benefits I have here</p>	<p>It wouldn't <b>have been</b> too costly for me to leave <b>the</b> organisation for another</p> <p><b>At the time</b>, staying with my organisation was a matter of necessity as much as desire</p> <p>I <b>felt</b> I had too few options to consider leaving <b>the</b> organisation</p> <p>One of the few serious consequences of leaving <b>that</b> organisation was the scarcity of available alternatives</p> <p>One of the major reasons I <b>continued</b> to work for <b>the</b> organisation was that leaving would require considerable personal sacrifice - another organisation may not match the overall benefits I <b>had</b> there</p>
<p><b>Normative commitment:</b></p>	
<p>I think that people these days move from company to company too often</p> <p>I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organisation</p>	<p>I think that people these days move from company to company too often</p> <p>I do not believe that a person must always be loyal to his or her organisation</p> <p>Jumping from organisation to</p>

<p>Jumping from organisation to organisation does not seem unethical to me</p> <p>One of the major reasons that I continue to work for this organisation is that I believe loyalty is important and therefore feel a sense of moral obligation to remain</p> <p>If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organisation</p> <p>I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organisation</p> <p>Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organisation for most of their careers</p> <p>I do not think that wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is sensible anymore</p>	<p>organisation does not seem unethical to me</p> <p>One of the major reasons that I continued to work for <b>the</b> organisation is that I believe loyalty is important and therefore <b>felt</b> a sense of moral obligation to remain</p> <p>If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not <b>have felt</b> it was right to leave my organisation</p> <p>I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organisation</p> <p>Things were better in the days when people stayed with one organisation for most of their careers</p> <p>I do not think that wanting to be a 'company man' or 'company woman' is sensible anymore</p>
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**DASS21 – Depression, Anxiety Stress Scale**(Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995)

Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2 or 3, which indicates how much the statement applied to you over the past week. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.

The rating scale is as follows [**0: Did not apply to me at all, 1: Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time, 2: Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time, 3: Applied to me very much, or most of the time**]

- I found it hard to wind down
- I was aware of dryness of my mouth
- I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all
- I experienced breathing difficulty (e.g., excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)
- I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things.
- I tended to over-react to situations
- I experienced trembling (e.g., in the hands)
- I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy
- I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself
- I felt that I had nothing to look forward to
- I found myself getting agitated
- I found it difficult to relax
- I felt down-hearted and blue
- I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing
- I felt I was close to panic
- I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything
- I felt I wasn't worth much as a person
- I felt that I was rather touchy
- I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (e.g., sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)
- I felt scared without any good reason
- I felt that life was meaningless

## **Appendix F: Work and Babies Study Three. Survey items**

### **Demographics**

- Age
- Gender
- Education level
- Marital status
- Country
- Do you have any children? Yes/No
  - If yes, how many?
  - If yes, age of the youngest
  - If more than 2 children, age of oldest
- Percentage of domestic responsibility (0 to 100%)
- Please select your current work status
  - Currently working
  - On parental leave
  - Not employed
  - Other
- If on leave or currently not working, report on the role you last occupied.
- Your profession (e.g., accountant, psychologist, student, lawyer, chiropractor, executive assistant, sales person, teacher, etc.): open ended
- Current position classification/level
  - Level one: Support, clerical or operational role with no supervisory responsibilities.
  - Level two: Line manager or supervisory role. For example, a shift manager/supervisor
  - Level three: Mid-level management. Responsible for managing a team on an ongoing basis or having some strategic responsibilities
  - Level four: Senior manager/director
  - Level five: Top management/CEO
- Salary range (drop down)

- \$0
  - \$1–\$6,000
  - \$6,001–\$20,000
  - \$20,001–\$34,000
  - \$34,001–\$57,000
  - \$57,001–\$80,000
  - \$80,001–\$100,000
  - \$100,001–\$180,000
  - \$180,000+
- On average, how many days do you engage in paid work?

## **Scales**

### **Bem sex role inventory (Short) (Bem, 1974)**

Rate yourself on each item, on a scale from 1 (never or almost never true) to 7 (almost always true)

- |                            |                                       |                                 |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Defends own beliefs (m) | 12. Leadership ability (m)            | 21. Dominant (m)                |
| 2. Moody (n)               | 13. Sensitive to other's needs (f)    | 22. Warm (f)                    |
| 3. Independent (m)         | 14. Truthful (n)                      | 23. Willing to take a stand (m) |
| 4. Conscientious (n)       | 15. Willing to take risks (m)         | 24. Tender (f)                  |
| 5. Affectionate (f)        | 16. Understanding (f)                 | 25. Aggressive (m)              |
| 6. Assertive (m)           | 17. Secretive (n)                     | 26. Adaptable (n)               |
| 7. Strong personality (m)  | 18. Compassionate (f)                 | 27. Loves children (f)          |
| 8. Forceful (m)            | 19. Eager to soothe hurt feelings (f) | 28. Tactful (n)                 |
| 9. Reliable (n)            | 20. Conceited (n)                     | 29. Gentle (f)                  |
| 10. Sympathetic (f)        |                                       | 30. Conventional (n)            |
| 11. Jealous (n)            |                                       |                                 |

**Maternal separation anxiety scale (MSAS; Subscale 1), (Hock, McBride & Gnezda, 1989)**

**[1: Strongly agree, 2: Disagree, 3: Somewhat agree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree]**

1. I miss holding or cuddling my child when I am away from him/her
2. My child is happier with me than with babysitters or teachers
3. Children will be afraid in a new place without their mother
4. When away from my child, I often wonder if his/her physical needs (dry diapers, enough to eat, etc.) are being met
5. Holding and cuddling my child makes me feel so good that I really miss the physical closeness when I'm away
6. I am more concerned with my child's physical safety than a babysitter or teacher
7. It will be difficult for my child to adjust to someone else taking care of him/her
8. When I am away from my child, I feel lonely and miss him/her a great deal
9. Only a mother just naturally knows how to comfort her distressed child
10. A child is likely to get upset when he/she is left with a babysitter
11. I like to have my child close to me most of the time
12. I am naturally better at keeping my child safe than any other person
13. I believe that my child misses me when I have to let someone else take care of him/her for a while
14. I don't like to leave my child
15. My child prefers to be with me more than with anyone else
16. My child is afraid and sad when he/she is not with me
17. When I am separated from my child, I wonder whether he/she is crying and missing me
18. I don't enjoy myself when I'm away from my child
19. I worry that my child is never completely comfortable in an unfamiliar setting if I am not with him/her
20. I worry when someone else cares for my child
21. When away from my child, I worry about whether or not the babysitter is able to soothe and comfort my child if he/she is lonely or upset.

**Career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990)**

Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements.

[1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Somewhat agree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree]

I am satisfied with

1. The success I have achieved in my career
2. The progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals
3. The progress I have made towards meeting my goals for income
4. The progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement
5. The progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.

**Desired aspiration (Adapted from Tharenou & Terry, 1998)**

How true are the following for you? (If you are currently not working, think of the role you normally occupy)

[1: Completely false, 2: Mostly false, 3: Partly false, partly true, 4: Mostly true, 5: Completely true]

1. My aspirations are very high in regard to professional recognition and achievement
2. I have no ambition to advance to a higher level position (r)
3. I would like to be in a position of greater influence in the department/organisation.
4. It would not bother me if I was to continue to do the same kind of work (r)
5. I do not wish to advance to a position of more responsibility (r)
6. I would like to move into a higher position over the next five years
7. For me the hassles of being in a higher position would outweigh the benefits (r)
8. I would like to advance to a position where I can have an influence or a greater influence on policy decisions
9. A promotion to a higher position means more worries and should be avoided for that reason (r)



10. It would be good to be in a position in which I could develop, manage, and coordinate the policies and activities of a work area
11. I would like to get into jobs with higher levels of responsibility, and would not mind if I eventually moved out of work specifically related to my area of technical expertise
12. I intend to apply for a higher position
13. My plans including attaining a higher position.

### **Core self-evaluation (Judge, 2003)**

[1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neutral, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree]

1. I am confident I get the success I deserve in life
2. Sometimes I feel depressed (r)
3. When I try, I generally succeed
4. Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless (r)
5. I complete tasks successfully
6. Sometimes, I do not feel in control of my work (r)
7. Overall, I am satisfied with myself
8. I am filled with doubts about my competence (r)
9. I determine what will happen in my life
10. I do not feel in control of my success in my career (r)
11. I am capable of coping with most of my problems
12. There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me (r).

### **In-group identification; centrality subscale. (Leach, Zomeran, Zebel, Vliek, Pennekamp, Doosje, & Ouwerkerk, 2008)**

7-point scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much)

	<b>Parents</b>	<b>Non-parents</b>
<b>Parenthood</b>	I often think about the fact that I am [A mother   A Father]	I often think about the fact that I <b>will be</b> [A mother   A Father]
	The fact that I am [A	The fact that I <b>will be</b> am

	<p>mother   A Father] is an important part of my identity</p> <p>Being [A mother   A Father] is an important part of how I see myself</p>	<p>[A mother   A Father] is an important part of my identity</p> <p>Being [A mother   A Father] is an important part of how I see myself <b>in the future.</b></p>
<b>Profession</b>	<p>I often think about the fact that I am [A profession]</p> <p>The fact that I am [A profession] is an important part of my identity</p> <p>Being [A profession] is an important part of how I see myself</p>	<p>I often think about the fact that I am [A profession]</p> <p>The fact that I am [A profession] is an important part of my identity</p> <p>Being [A profession] is an important part of how I see myself</p>

## Appendix G: Work and Babies Study Three. Flyers



The flyer features a stylized black tree with two orange birds perched on its branches. The text 'Pssst..... Dads? No kids? We want hear from you too!' is written in a curved path around the tree. The title 'Work + Babies' is in large orange font, followed by the subtitle 'How does parenthood affect careers of men and women?'. Below this, a blue text block states: 'Be part of a study that explores how we make sense of leadership, our aspirations and belief in our abilities to succeed'. The website 'workandbabies.com' is prominently displayed in orange, with a QR code to its right. A teal curved line separates the main text from the footer. The footer includes the Macquarie University logo, the Faculty of Human Sciences, and the Department of Psychology website.

**Work + Babies**  
How does parenthood affect careers  
of men and women?

Be part of a study that explores  
how we make sense of  
leadership, our aspirations and  
belief in our abilities to succeed

**workandbabies.com**

It's open to **everyone** and we need a diverse mix of people, so  
jump onto [www.workandbabies.com](http://www.workandbabies.com) to take part.

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Department of Psychology  
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## Appendix H: Ethics Approval

Appendix H of this thesis has been removed as it may contain sensitive/confidential content