Author(s): Ikonen, Hanna-Mari

Title: Becoming and Being a Creative and Entrepreneurial Mum in Finland

Year: 2020

Version: Accepted version (Final draft)

Please cite the original version:

Ikonen, H.-M. (2020). Becoming and Being a Creative and Entrepreneurial Mum in Finland. In S. Taylor, & S. Luckman (Eds.), Pathways into Creative Working Lives (pp. 193-209). Palgrave Macmillan. Creative Working Lives. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38246-9_11

Becoming and Being a Creative and Entrepreneurial Mum in Finland

Hanna-Mari Ikonen

Abstract

This chapter explores the pathways of mothers with young children into cultural and creative industries (CCIs). These women can be described as mumpreneurs, meaning that they combine running a business enterprise with looking after their children. CCIs are typically unstable, insecure, and unpredictable, but they also offer scope for great self-engagement and personal satisfaction. At the same time, the current culture of intensive mothering has made motherhood more challenging than in the past. Mumpreneurship may be a way to 'have it all' for the women interviewed for this study. However, critical researchers have suggested that this individual 'choice' locks women into marginalized roles in the neoliberal economy, and makes them scale back their dreams. This chapter particularly studies the experiences of mothers in Finland. The ways that they balance motherhood and creative entrepreneurship are interpreted in the context of CCI work cultures and Finnish social and labor market policy. The article suggests that the Finnish childcare system, the culture of women's work, and the scarcity of waged work in CCIs together explain why Finnish mumpreneurs talk about their situation in rather positive terms.

Keywords: creative entrepreneurship, mumpreneurship, intensive mothering, Finland

Introduction

This chapter explores how Finnish mothers with young children enter the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and work as entrepreneurs, and how their pathways are shaped by Finnish social policy infrastructures, CCI work cultures and changing conceptions of good mothering. The research participants can be described as 'mumpreneurs' because they combine running a business with looking after their children. How do these mothers negotiate entrepreneurial pathways into and through creative work alongside contemporary expectations around intensive parenting? The chapter analyses interviews with creative mumpreneurs and also explores the Finnish welfare infrastructures such as public childcare system and parental leave possibilities for fathers. Based on this evidence, I argue that access to state subsidized quality childcare enables or at least eases mumpreneurs' pathways into and through creative work. Additionally, the Finnish norm of working mothers may lessen the combined mental load of being a mother and an entrepreneur in the cultural and creative sector.

In what follows, I briefly review debates around creative work and entrepreneurship as well as the culture of intensive mothering. I construct an argument that, for women dealing with the conditions of creative work and attempting to reconcile discourses of enterprise and intensive mothering, mumpreneurship appears as an appealing way to 'strike a balance'. I outline the Finnish context and present the research project. The research interviews are then analyzed to show, first, different pathways to creative mumpreneurship and second, the strategies of achieving the balance. The chapter concludes by suggesting explanations for the rather positive tone the researched mumpreneurs present in their interviews.

Creative work, mumpreneurship and the culture of intensive mothering

A creative career is a popular aspiration, as it appears to offer great scope for self-engagement and personal satisfaction. Yet the sector is not without problems. Researchers have noted that the CCI may appear open and democratic but older inequalities, including of race and gender, persist (Idriss, 2018; McRobbie, 2016). The sector is also highly competitive and requires a worker to cultivate the 'right' kind of self. For instance, Gill (2014) notes the pressure to be constantly positive and deny difficulties. The CCI are characterized by instability, insecurity, and unpredictability. Nevertheless, the uncertainty of careers in other industries, and the seemingly open pathways toward creative employment, elicit and sustain hope (Kuehn and Corrigan, 2013).

Thus, the figure of the creative maker has grown in importance (Taylor, 2018, p. 328), and the scope of what is considered creative work has widened. If the sector originally included visual arts, design, and crafts, it now has much more variety, encompassing fashion, retail, cultural industries, and the information industry (Fuller, Hamilton, and Seale, 2013, cited in Taylor, 2018, p. 329; Hesmondhalgh, 2007). For contemporary creative workers, digitalization has brought significant changes. Digital technologies facilitate online networking, marketing and sales. Digital developments also facilitate novel forms of creative work that take place exclusively via information and communication technology (ICT), such as digital gaming, blogging (Mäkinen 2018), vlogging (Ashton & Patel, 2018), and webinars. More traditional creative work also incorporates digital elements, as in online selling of crafts (Luckman, 2016).

In digital and more traditional creative work, self-employment—with its attendant individual risk-taking—seems to offer an opportunity for individuals to do what they want to do under conditions that are more controllable than they would be in paid employment. Therefore, self-employment attracts many workers, workers-to-be and jobseekers. This interest reflects the general rise of entrepreneurship in current societies. Research has shown that more and more types of work are becoming entrepreneurialized, not only in the form of the employment, but also in the mindset with which the work is performed (Ikonen and Nikunen, 2018; Bröckling, 2016; Luckman, 2016; Scharff, 2016; Gill, 2014). Bröckling (2016) argues that the discourse of enterprise is a form of governance which purports to help people by telling them how to live their lives, for example by relying on creativity. As a consequence, the entrepreneurial self is a form of subjectification which includes the process of constantly shaping the self in a competitive way (Bröckling 2016). Work's entrepreneurial character means that self-formulated, project-like, and creative ways of working are becoming common. Thus, entrepreneurialism affects how we see ourselves as workers and think about work, not least in a creative sector which is characterized by developing and selling individual skills and competing against others (McRobbie, 2016).

Thus, being creative and being entrepreneurial are constructed as an ideal subjectivity for women and men alike. For women creative aspirants (and some others), mumpreneurship appears to offer an opportunity to practice creative work and become a balanced woman who is able to 'have it all' or 'make things work' (Orgad, 2019). In mumpreneurship, mothering and business are co-constituted (Littler, 2018; Ekinsmyth, 2014; Lewis, 2010). Mumpreneurship often takes place at home, or at least makes use of places in the home environment and neighborhood, like cafes. The development of ICT has created opportunities for new types and spaces of working beyond the traditional way of separating work and home spaces (Mäkinen, 2018; Ekinsmyth, 2014). Not always but often, mumpreneurship involves a creative practice, particularly in digital microbusinesses (Orgad, 2019, p. 145). There is some uncertainty about who qualifies as a 'mumpreneur' – for example, Ekinsmyth defines the term as someone who has configured her business around her caring role rather than simply combining the roles – but this new type of entrepreneur seems to be highly relevant for mothers' labor politics (Ekinsmyth 2014, p. 2).

Littler (2018) points out that bringing work from the masculine public sphere into the private sphere of the home is sometimes presented as a reconfiguration that is automatically empowering, which is a problematic view. Mumpreneurship can also be seen as a meritocratic solution which resolves the problems of work and childcare while also being respectable and fulfilling (Littler, 2018). However, mothers' businesses are usually microscale in terms of practices and performance, thereby maintaining the gendered division of work, including the positioning of women's work as a less significant supplement to male breadwinning (e.g. Lewis, 2010). According to Gregg (2008, pp. 291–292), policy and media representations of mothers taking care of young children and working at the same time reinforce the image of women's 'natural preference' for this flexibly combined practice, which does not threaten their primary caregiver role. Consequently, mumpreneurs are not necessarily taken seriously in business relationships. Even more importantly, this neoliberal 'choice', which women seem to have made individually, potentially locks women into marginalized roles in the economy and makes them scale back their dreams (Orgad, 2019; Taylor, 2015).

There may also be some 'forced mumpreneurship'. In a study by Wilson and Yochim (2017), mothers in precarious labor market positions (not only in the CCI) saw no better option than to perform entrepreneurial practices to combine work and childcare in ways that fitted the ideals they had drawn from their cultural environment. Women took up this activity to fulfill the promise of happiness, an affect they thought it was their responsibility to produce for their family (Wilson and Yochim, 2017, p. 21). In a similar vein to Orgad (2019), Wilson and Yochim note that the women they studied assumed gendered practices which in other circumstances might run counter to their feminist ideals. These women put aside their own wishes to compensate for macro-level structural problems, such as job losses or under-resourced public schools (Wilson and Yochim, 2017, p. 22). However, the Finnish context, discussed below, seems to offer less cruel circumstances for mothers. This suggests the importance of studying mumpreneurship within a specific cultural context.

Mumpreneurs may be committed to the cultural phenomenon of intensive parenting. This parenting ideology emphasizes the importance of breastfeeding, education, play, and quality time (Ekinsmyth 2014, pp. 3–5). The ideology may add to the pressures experienced by parents, particularly mothers. The concept of intensive mothering was introduced by Hays (1998), who notes that it holds the individual mother as primarily responsible for child-rearing and also assumes that she is child-centered, guided by experts, emotionally supportive, hardworking, and prepared to invest in the child financially. Lee et al. (2014, p. 2) show that parents learn from cultural discourses circulated in the media that the child's tomorrow depends on mothers' decisions today. Furedi (2002) describes this trend as paranoid parenting, while Macvarish (2016) investigates the invasion of parenting by expert knowledge, particularly the major role of neuroscience in the families of infants. Thanks to the notion that parents have the potential both to create dysfunction in their children and to improve their life chances, parenting has become demanding and highly politicized. Hays (1998) suggests that being a working mother—which is discursively associated with acting in competitive and ambitious ways—is assumed to conflict with being a mother, which is associated with acting in unselfish and nurturing ways. Instead of lessening this contradiction by encouraging the use of the childcare system, the ideology of intensive mothering has only exacerbated the affective and material pressures mothers face. Villalobos (2014) suggests that 'good mothering' is more mother-centered than child-centered: as mothers concentrate on forming supportive relationships with their children, they try to acquire a personal sense of security in an individualistic society that makes people responsible for their own success.

Orgad (2019) conducted a profound study of highly educated London-based women who had made a 'choice' to leave their careers and become stay-at-home mothers. Orgad's argues that the 'choice' was evidence of failed gender equality at work and in families. The choice is constructed and supported by media and policy representations. Orgad's research participants had withdrawn from paid work altogether, but what they dreamed about—again, supported by policy and media

discourses—was mumpreneurship. By being mumpreneurial, the mothers hoped to combine the traditionally undervalued reproductive role with a return to participation in capitalist production. This return is not easy in practice, argues Orgad (2019). Her interviewees, however, did not yet have experience of mumpreneurship. My interviewees instead do have this experience.

The Finnish context

Working and child-rearing cultures differ across countries, due in part to different social security systems. The context where Finnish mumpreneurs work differs from the United Kingdom (UK) and United States (US), the countries on which many previous studies have focused. Finland has a relatively long history of public daycare, since the 1960s and 1970s. A law on public daycare was passed in 1973 that requires municipalities to arrange a kindergarten place for every child. Finland also has a culture of mothers working full-time (Attila et al., 2019, p. 27), and it lacks a widespread stay-at-home mother culture (Julkunen, 2010, ch. 3). The childcare benefit is widely used and it affects how Finnish parents think about using daycare: it is morally legitimate to do so. These circumstances have contributed to making women's labor market participation a norm.

Despite the culture of working mothers, young children are often cared for at home. A small state subsidy makes it possible for one parent (almost exclusively the mother) to perform care duties until the child reaches the age of three. In practice, most parents return to work when the child is approximately two years old (Salmi, Närvi, and Lammi-Taskula, 2018, p. 164). Those who stay longer are in a weaker position when they return to the labor market. For example, they might have no education or no job to return to if their fixed-term contract ended during their maternity leave (Salmi, Närvi, and Lammi-Taskula, 2018, p. 164).

In general, women in Finland do not need to justify working. On the contrary, women, including mothers, are expected to contribute to public and household economies. However, the question of how to combine work—which is sometimes turbulent and precarious—with advanced and thoughtful mothering practices is a burning question in both personal lives and public discussions, even in Finland. For example, studies continue to reveal a persistent bias in how men and women participate in housework, take family leave, and advance in their careers (Attila et al., 2019). The labor market remains gender-segregated, and as women and men work in different sectors, practices remain gendered (Attila et al., 2019). Women continue to face the challenges involved in reconciling work and family.

The Research

For the research project discussed in this chapter, I conducted interviews with 21 self-employed white Finnish women. At the time of the interviews, the women were aged 24–40 years and had one to four children, ranging in age from four months to eight years. Some were currently expecting their second babies. All were or had been in heterosexual relationships. A few were divorced, and were either single or in new relationships. I conducted the interviews with two groups of university students who participated in my research-based course on work and motherhood in 2018 and 2019. The interviews lasted roughly one hour. They were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed in Finnish; only the extracts that are used here as illustrations were translated into English.

Here I mainly draw from interviews with 13 women whose businesses were creative in the traditional or broader CCI definition s. Some were graphic designers, freelance journalists, professional bloggers, and theater producers. Others produced material artifacts such as paintings, photographs, flower arrangements, and children's clothing. Some of the interviewees have training

in their field of work, but they have all acquired additional skills by following informal, self-managed routes to commercialize their current activities. All of the research participants talk passionately about their work. Undoubtedly, it is a considerable part of their subjectivity.

Children were only rarely described as having directly affected women's decisions to start a business. Some women were entrepreneurs before having children; some became entrepreneurs shortly afterwards but do not consider that motherhood played a role during the establishment phase, although they recognize its role in their mundane entrepreneurship practices. Not all of the participants had really configured their business around their caring roles, the definition on a mumpreneur that Ekinsmyth (2014, p. 2) uses. However, it seems that being a mother of young children inspires one to think about what one wants from one's working life. The solution may be to start something new gradually, inspired by the break from ordinary working life that maternity leave in Finland allows.

Pathways into creative entrepreneurship

This section discusses pathways into creative entrepreneurship with examples from the research participants. For some of these women, the nature or idea of the business had no connection to their mothering role, but others had developed a business that drew on their mothering experience. I first discuss two participants, Sarah and Emily, both of whose business ideas are separate from their roles as mothers. (I refer to all the participants using pseudonyms.) They differ in terms of when they started their businesses in relation to becoming a parent. For comparison, I will then discuss Sandra, who found her business idea when she became an insider of mothering culture thanks to her own baby, and who thus is a mumpreneur who configures her business around her mothering role in a very specific sense (see Ekinsmyth 2014, p. 1237).

Sarah started her creative writing and social media business independently of her motherhood—her now eight-year-old daughter is not mentioned anywhere in her story about becoming an entrepreneur. Here is how Sarah accounts for it.

> It was probably because of my two jobs that I ended up here [entrepreneurship]. I did writing and teaching. I couldn't do them both anymore. It was not possible timewise, I was close to burnout already. I had to choose one. And I thought, well, I can teach forever, but this social media and possibility to write, which always had been my dream, that exists only now. So I will try this now. […] So entrepreneurship in a way became a by-product.

Previously she was in a waged job which she mostly enjoyed, and where she could use some creativity. Like many creative workers, at first she put her extra creativity and ideas into leisure activities—blogging, in this case—which gradually became a part-time enterprise. However, as the popularity of her website grew and provided opportunities for new activities, she did not have time to do both anymore, and she quit her waged job. Now and in the future, if all goes to plan, she will concentrate on other social media activities, such as planning social media marketing for other firms, acting as a host at various events, and writing a book and columns (see Mäkinen, 2018 on the complex business logics of mommy bloggers).

Emily is a florist. Having previously done floristry on a commission basis, she started her own florist shop just after having her first baby. Emily and her husband built their own house in a village close to a bigger city while their first child was a baby. The house was planned with a florist shop in mind. Despite an opportunity to do so, Emily decided not to buy a shop in the city; she wanted to expand and develop her business activity, but to work at home. She says that she is not able to define herself more as a stay-at-home mother or an entrepreneur.

> Q: How would you explain what you do for work?
>
> A: I am a florist and a stay-at-home mother. I was just thinking one day about which one I am more, am I the stay-at-home mom or the florist? For my work, well, I have a first-floor florist shop here, and at the same time Jim [her younger son] is at home.

She is hardworking. Her now six-year-old son is in daycare, but she looks after her two-year-old son at home, at the same time as opening the florist shop a few hours per day. She works regularly but her hours are flexible. Her daily work also includes ordering the flowers to sell, selling interior design accessories (for a company for which she is a representative), and doing various tasks to keep the business running. She also creates floral designs for customers' special occasions. Now she has tentative plans to start another enterprise, although she does not say much about this in the interview. She raises the topic of the new firm when talking about how she is ambitious and energetic and still wants to do something more. Nevertheless, an important aspect of her future plans is that she will still be at home enough for her children.

One of the few participants who started their firms in response to opportunities that arose due to motherhood is Sandra, the mother of two sons aged two and four years. She became interested in sewing while expecting her first baby. She became active in a couple of sewing groups on Facebook, and her sewing skills developed. She started to get orders from other group members who were also mothers of young children, and who were interested in unique and functionally designed children's clothes; eventually she established a firm. Between her pregnancies, she returned to her previous waged work as a cook and also did sewing work on the side. Then she happened to discover that certain types of sewing pattern were not available on the market. After some research she created a network of contacts to design and produce such patterns. She now concentrates on coordinating the sale of patterns and sewing accessories, as well as sharing new ideas and tips for home sewers. Her unemployed husband helps her by photographing the products and taking care of the children (who also use daycare).

Here is how Sandra reflects on her entrepreneurial pathway:

> I really thought it over and over if I would take [a work space outside the home] or not, but then I decided that anyway it is a rather tiny price from which I'd get more working time, and my work would become more effective, and I realized that I would be silly not to take it. I wouldn't be in the situation I am now if I hadn't left my home office. […] Considering how this whole firm has come forward, it is something I could never have imagined, that this has got so big now. […] We had exponential growth in the first year, and I was really confused over what should I do now. […] I don't know about the future, I don't dare to say anything about it.

I hear both goal-orientation and amazement in Sandra's talk. On the one hand, she says that it was absolutely necessary to move on from sewing at home while the children were asleep to having a work space outside the home; but on the other hand, she could never have imagined where the last one or two years would take her. For this working-class mother, rising up the career ladder has never been a goal, and even today she says she has no plans concerning her firm's future. Generally, her storyline is not very coherent, and her answers are shorter than those of many others, who are more reflective in telling their stories (see Skeggs, 2004 on how considering one's own story to be worth telling is a classed issue).

The beginning of Sandra's business can be seen as classically mumpreneurial. It originated from her role and identity as a mother, it first took place at home, and it was essentially dependent on ICT and networking in virtual spaces (Luckman, 2016; Ekinsmyth, 2014; Lewis, 2010). Today, although her children are still young, work has taken a major role in Sandra's life, and she has actually

become a businesswoman, albeit in a classed and gendered way—she still denies purposive business growth. It may be that when future researchers are evaluating the effectiveness of mumpreneurship as a labor market solution for mothers, they will need to consider a more extended time period to observe the long-term development of the mumpreneurial enterprise.

Explaining the ways of being a creative entrepreneur and mother

This section takes us deeper into the research participants' creative practices, which are partly shaped by the Finnish welfare infrastructures. Most of my interviewees have used, are using, or intend in the near future to use the public daycare to which every child is entitled. Most of them use it full-time, but they stress that their entrepreneurial flexibility means they can leave their children in kindergarten for less time than would be possible in waged work—for example, between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. only. Some also only use daycare three or four days a week.

In the case of Alex, a graphic designer and mother of a one-year-old daughter, her return to work happened earlier than would have been the case if she had been an employee. Her husband is now on parental leave, and her daughter will start kindergarten in few months. Alex's account includes reflections about flexibility and autonomy that were presented in every interview:

> If I was a waged worker in any of the firms where I have worked previously, I'm sure I would have been at home much longer. […] Now, when I am an entrepreneur, working is so much more pleasant than anywhere I have been as a waged worker.

Alex's story is a positive example of being a mumpreneur in the creative sector. When her daughter was born, her husband was also a home-working freelancer in the creative sector. They were both able to be at home a lot during the first months, and thus became used to sharing care responsibilities. Then her husband got a waged job, and after some time his employer let him take parental leave, making Alex's return to work possible. Alex also uses their occupations as a justification for not caring too much about other peoples' opinions about child-rearing:

> Both my husband and I are people who really don't care about other peoples' opinions. I have thought a lot about why that is, and part of the answer might be that we both are, hmm, in the visual sector. I'm a graphic designer, and he is a photographer. So the work is such that everybody always has an opinion about it, and we have got used to it during our whole work careers that anybody can come and say that this [end product] is complete shit, without any explanation. And it is not an issue for us, we are so used to our work being evaluated all the time.

There are at least two things to note here. First, Alex—and she is not alone in this—individualizes and psychologizes her own attitude: she describes herself as the type of person who is not affected by others' opinions. Second, she also speaks here and throughout the interview about similarities between herself and her husband. She has good reason to do so, because they have made decisions that demonstrate shared values and equal practices. Equality in the family is perhaps one explanation for the satisfied, even happy tone of the interview (cf. Orgad 2019).

All of the interviewees also talk about the flexibility of their work as entrepreneurs. This flexibility is needed in their creative work, particularly when it is combined with motherhood. Indeed, many families keep going thanks precisely to the flexibility built into these creative—yet precarious—businesses. In particular, those who have no relatives or other safety nets outside the public services (which are valuable but do not cover evenings, nights, weekends or exceptional situations) can make everyday life work because one or both parents have flexible working schedules.

In these interviews, women draw on a parenting discourse that what is best for the mother (i.e. having a meaningful job) is also best for the child. This is not surprising in a country with a norm of women working full-time. Accepting this discourse is understandable when one is a mumpreneur, a term that already indicates that both motherhood and entrepreneurial work are important. All my interviewees are trying to 'strike a balance'. They want to be good mothers according to their own (culturally mediated) standards, but they are also driven by the creative content of their work. This makes them mumpreneurial in a similar vein to that described in the UK and US (e.g. Orgad, 2019; Littler, 2018; Luckman, 2016; Taylor, 2015; Ekinsmyth, 2014; Lewis, 2010) as well as Finland (Mäkinen, 2018).

These mothers want to differentiate themselves from exclusively stay-at-home mothers to whom they attach primarily negative attributes, such as losing one's previous self in motherhood, criticizing other mothers on the Internet, and sitting by a sandpit drinking coffee. This negative portrayal is completely different to a cultural figure that Angela McRobbie (2013) describes, of a privileged, postfeminist stay-at-home mother who chooses to run the family like a business in order to provide the best resources for her children's future. Orgad's (2019) interviewees—themselves highly educated stay-at-home mothers—told sad stories about feeling forced to reduce themselves to mothers only. This is the situation that my interviewees are afraid of and want to avoid.

Another participant, Amy, a theater producer who has a three-year-old son and is now pregnant again, describes the core change in motherhood since her mother's or grandmother's time:

> [It has changed] a lot. Not in practice, because it's all about raising the kid to adulthood, but the mental side.

She summarizes what the ideal mother looks like in today's society:

> A mother who is at home all the time [laughs] and cooks perfect food, and is completely present for all of her kids, and has mindfulness as her hobby, and she exercises, and is of course super-slim right after giving birth, and wears high heels. So something that is 'very easy' to achieve. Not really.

This ideal is perhaps closer to McRobbie's picture. If the ideal comes from the media, as Amy suggests in the interview and as Orgad (2019) argues in her book, it perhaps contributes to the view that creative mumpreneurship is s a good solution that enables women to meet cultural expectations of motherhood at least in part, and to say at least occasionally that they are putting their children first.

Jenny is a busy freelance journalist, writing coach, and mother of two children aged two and four years. To tackle her busy life full of duties and passions, she has set herself 'a learning objective', as she calls it, to seize the moment at home. At work, Jenny has set herself the different learning objective of becoming ever more efficient and spending minimum time on unnecessary tasks. Graphic designer Alex similarly talks about learning to prioritize her mental capacity, by which she means putting the most effort into the task of being actively present for her child, while also being very effective in her work and removing all 'excess' from it. In doing so, both believe that they must compromise their parenting roles, but only to a limited extent. Both women try to achieve their double objectives, of success in mothering and in their businesses, by monitoring and changing themselves. Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (2013) suggest that this 'psychological internalization of individual responsibilization' (p.6) is a feature of contemporary neoliberal societies. Interestingly, neither of these mumpreneurs seem to think that 'useless' time might be needed in their creative work. The problem with this neoliberal practice of working on one's own mind is that such work does not question unequal structures and practices of work and home life

(see Orgad, 2019). Therefore, some women are forced to abandon, at least temporarily, their boldest ambitions for their creative enterprises.

However, amid all the media talk about how hard it is to be a parent today, particularly for young women in the labor market, Alex reveals surprise at her own affective states. She accepts that the negative aspects of parenting, which are highly visible in the media, are real; but significantly, she states that the positive aspects are much less talked about and much more difficult to explain. She has a strong feeling that everything is 'in the right place' now, and the order of her priorities—where children come first—also feels right. Alex has proved to have the flexible mind favored in neoliberal capitalism, or, as an alternative, less critical explanation, she lives in an equal relationship where childcare duties have not overtaken her life.

Conclusions

As suggested by Orgad (2019) and Wilson and Yochim (2017), mothers in the neoliberal economy take responsibility for making their families happy, even though this means they follow practices that might run counter to their gender ideologies. My Finnish interviewees talked emotionally about their desire to raise their children to become mentally strong, stable, and confident individuals who could flexibly assume new roles without losing their sense of self – in other words, to meet the same requirements mothers themselves are meeting. In these efforts to raise loved and loving new citizens, having flexible, creative entrepreneurial work was seen as a great advantage.

Orgad (2019) takes a critical stance toward the idealized creative mumpreneurship discussion in the media. Even her highly educated stay-at-home mothers, who had given up their careers to care for their children, dreamed of such entrepreneurship. Orgad writes that their ambitions appeared to be vague and unrealistic. Indeed, mumpreneurship may bring with it many practices that reinforce gendered inequalities, both in families and at the societal level. However, I have argued here that the concept of mumpreneurship directs attention to the business activities of mothers, which otherwise might remain completely unnoticed. Ekinsmyth (2014, p. 13) also found representations of mumpreneurship potentially emancipating and transformative, yet also precarious and insignificant. I agree that it is important to recognize mumpreneurs as agentic subjects. This agency may encourage new creativity and invite them out of the exclusively female realm.

The entrepreneurial mothers I interviewed had not given up their careers involuntarily or completely after becoming mothers and finding motherhood irreconcilable with a conventional career. Therefore, being an entrepreneurial mother was described in generally positive terms. The creative sector plays a particular role here: often one must work as an entrepreneur, or at least entrepreneurially, because there is no waged work available. Because Finnish families can use public daycare, even though these creative entrepreneurs try to do so for only a moderate number of hours (this desire reflecting the ideal of being available for their children), it seems that they can almost 'have it all'. In cases where there are two flexible creative careers in the family, it is possible to genuinely share responsibilities. In the case of single parents, the flexibility of entrepreneurship still makes it possible to combine caring responsibilities and work. If the children live part of the time with their father, the mother can focus on creative work even more during childfree periods.

This chapter has offered a picture of different pathways into creative entrepreneurship by women who are also mothers, how these pathways have been made possible by state supported infrastructures, and how women make creative and entrepreneurial practices meaningful alongside their mothering role. I have found the concept of mumpreneurship useful because it pays attention to how entrepreneurship is affected, but not completely directed, by motherhood. Significant work-

related aspirations and agency are also involved. However, because mothering culture is also changing, there are new social and cultural expectations about how women should organize one's work and motherhood. The culture of intensive motherhood must be balanced with the Finnish culture of working women and a woman's own creative aspirations, which also reflects new working cultures. In a neoliberal era that reduces problems and solutions to individual responsibilities, there is an expectation that women will deal with such challenges individually. My interviews describe their situations as individual choices, and accept life adjustments as necessary.

Being a mumpreneur at a certain point in life does not necessarily involve oppressive, marginalizing practices; but prevent unequal practices from continuing, women should become aware of larger structures and institutions, as well as neoliberal politics, and recognize how their own desires and practices have emerged. For example, why do they want to work at home now, decades after feminist politics has freed them to work outside home? The new cultural ideals of mothering should not lead to retraditionalization of the spheres of home or work; instead, we must retain the provision of public quality childcare and expect fathers to use their share of parental leave.

References

Ashton, D. & Patel, K. (2018). Vlogging careers: Everyday experience, collaboration and authenticity. In S. Taylor & S. Luckman (Eds.), The new normal of working lives: Critical studies in contemporary work and employment (pp. 147–169). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Attila, H., Pietiläinen, M., Keski-Petäjä, M., Hokka, P., & Nieminen, M. (2019) Gender equality barometer 2017. Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 12/2018. Available at: http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-4012-3 (Accessed: 24 April 2019).

Bröckling, U. (2016) *The entrepreneurial self: Fabricating a new type of subject*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Ekinsmyth, C. (2014) Mothers' business, work/life and the politics of 'mumpreneurship'. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 21(10), 1230–1248.

Fuller, G., Hamilton, C., & Seale, K. (2013) Working with amateur labour: Between culture and economy. *Cultural Studies Review*, 19, 143–154.

Furedi, F. (2002) *Paranoid parenting: Why ignoring the experts may be best for your child*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

Gill, R. (2014) Unspeakable inequalities: Post feminism, entrepreneurial subjectivity, and the repudiation of sexism among cultural workers. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, 21(4), 509–528.

Gill, R. & Scharff, C. (2013). Introduction. In Gill, R. & Scharff, C. (Eds.) *New Feminities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity* (1-20). Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gregg, M. (2008) The normalisation of flexible female labour in the information economy. *Feminist Media Studies*, 8(3), 285–299.

Hays, S. (1998) *The cultural contradictions of motherhood*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Hesmondhalgh, D. (2007) *The cultural industries*. London: Sage.

Idriss, S. (2018) *Young migrant identities: Creativity and masculinity*. New York: Routledge.

Ikonen, H.-M., & Nikunen, M. (2018) Young adults and the tuning of the entrepreneurial mindset in neoliberal capitalism. *Journal of Youth Studies*. http://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2018.1546383.

Julkunen, R. (2010) *Sukupuolen järjestykset ja tasa-arvon paradoksit*. Tampere: Vastapaino.

Kuehn, K., & Corrigan, T. F. (2013) Hope labor: The role of employment prospects in online social production. *Political Economy of Communication*, 1(1). Available at: http://www.polecom.org/index.php/polecom/article/view/9/64 (Accessed: 26 April 2019).

Lee, E., Bristow, J., Faircloth, C., & Macvarish, J. (2014) *Parenting culture studies*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lewis, P. (2010) 'Mumpreneurs': Revealing the post-feminist entrepreneur. In P. Lewis & R. Simpson (Eds.), *Revealing and concealing gender: Issues of visibility in organizations* (pp. 124–138). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Littler, J. (2018) *Against meritocracy: Culture, power and myths of mobility*. London: Routledge.

Luckman, S. (2016) Micro-enterprise as work-life 'magical solution'. In L. Adkins & M. Dever (Eds.), *The post-Fordist sexual contract: Working and living in contingency* (pp. 91–108). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Macvarish, J. (2016) *Neuroparenting: The expert invasion of family life*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mäkinen, K. (2018) Negotiating the intimate and the professional in mom blogging. In S. Taylor & S. Luckman (Eds.), *The new normal of working lives: Critical studies in contemporary work and employment* (pp. 129–146). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

McRobbie, A. (2013) Feminism, the family and the new 'mediated' maternalism. *New Formations*, 80, 119–137.

McRobbie, A. (2016) *Being creative: Making a living in the new culture industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Orgad, S. (2019) *Heading home: Motherhood, work, and the promise of failed equality*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Salmi, M., Närvi, J., & Lammi-Taskula, J. (2018) Finland country note. In S. Blum, A. Koslowski, A. Macht, & P. Moss (Eds.), *International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2018*. Available at: http://www.leavenetwork.org/lp_and_r_reports (Accessed: 26 April 2019).

Scharff, C. (2016) The psychic life of neoliberalism: Mapping the contours of entrepreneurial subjectivity. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 33(6), 107–122.

Skeggs, B. (2004) *Class, self, culture*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, S. (2015) A new mystique? Working for yourself in the neoliberal economy. *Sociological Review*, 63(1), 174–187.

Taylor, S. (2018) Beyond work? New expectations and aspirations. In S. Taylor & S. Luckman (Eds.), *The new normal of working lives: Critical studies in contemporary work and employment* (pp. 327–345). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Taylor, S., & Luckman, S. (2018) Collection introduction: The 'new normal' of working lives. In S. Taylor & S. Luckman (Eds.), *The new normal of working lives: Critical studies in contemporary work and employment* (pp. 1–15). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Villalobos, A. (2014) *Motherload: Making it all better in insecure times*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Wilson, J. A., & Yochim, E. C. (2017) *Mothering through precarity: Women's work and digital media*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.