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The Superwomen of Modern Time

**A case study about gender equality and work-life balance among
highly educated mothers living and working in Buenos Aires,
Argentina**

Thesis submitted for the Master Degree in
International Social Welfare and Health Policy

Spring 2017

**Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences,
Faculty of Social Sciences**

Abstract

Gender equality and women's rights are current topics worldwide. Women are getting new roles and positions in political life and the labor market, while men participate more in domestic work and childcare. Work-life balance is thereby crucial for both genders.

Argentina is a country of European immigrants, and may appear similar to a European country regarding women's right, especially considering its history of female leaders. On the other hand, Argentina is influenced by a male dominated Latin-American culture with traditional gender roles. In this thesis, qualitative method and semi-structured interviews are used to interview highly educated mothers who are living and working in Buenos Aires, Argentina. It examines their strategies to achieve a healthy work-life balance and their experience of gender equality. Furthermore, it identifies similarities and differences between different age groups. To analyze the findings and draw conclusions, structuration theory and the capability approach provided the guidelines.

The findings of this research indicate that the Argentinian society, in general, facilitates fathers in being breadwinners and mothers in taking care of the family and the obligations at home. Nevertheless, the society is moving towards two-income households. Since divorces and single mothers are growing phenomena, many women need paid employment to provide for their family. Several laws and regulations help promote women's participation in the labor market. However, nowadays the demand for women to have paid employment is stronger than the expectations for men to participate in household activities and childcare. Further, most of the women we interviewed lacked a long-term work contract and thereby losing their rights to social benefits.

The most common strategies the women used to combine paid and unpaid obligation were choosing flexible work, help from friends and family, and having paid help at home. Regarding gender equality, women are still often dependent on others, but the findings indicate a significant improvement among the youngest women compared to the oldest.

Key concepts: work-life balance, gender equality

Oslo and Akershus University College

Oslo 2017

Acknowledgements

Firstly, we would like to express our gratitude towards all the interviewees of this research. In addition to answering our questions, you provided us with useful information regarding the Argentinian laws and regulations as well as the social norms of the society.

Above all, we would like to express gratefulness to our supervisor Professor Rune Halvorsen, Oslo and Akershus University College. You have recommended relevant literature and given us motivation. Despite the fact that we have been in Argentina for most of the time, you have organized guidance over Skype and provided us with constructive feedback throughout the writing process.

Further, our greatest gratitude goes to our other supervisor, Professor Griselda Lassaga, Universidad de Belgrano, who has helped us since day one. Not only did you help us gather informants and collect data, but also with practical things that made our stay in Argentina so great and educational.

We would also like to give a special thank to our boyfriends and parents for supporting us throughout this process.

Kaja Amalie Endresen and Ida Granmo Hertzberg
Oslo, May 2017

Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Background.....	1
1.2	Rationalities for the study and research questions.....	3
1.2.1	Rationalities for the study.....	3
1.2.2	Research questions.....	4
1.3	How we ended up with this research and these research questions.....	5
1.3.1	The beginning.....	5
1.3.2	Women’s agency matters.....	6
1.4	Structure of the Thesis.....	7
2	Background.....	8
2.1	History of maternity protection and women in the labor market in Argentina.....	8
2.1.1	History of and today's maternity protection in Argentina.....	8
2.1.2	Women in the labor market in Argentina.....	11
2.1.3	Women in the labor market and what we want to examine.....	13
2.2	Previous research from Argentina and Latin America.....	14
2.2.1	Women and success in Argentina.....	15
2.2.2	Family context of Cohabitation and Single Motherhood in Latin America.....	16
2.2.3	Married women and work in Buenos Aires.....	17
2.3	Summary.....	19
3	European research on the topic.....	20
3.1	Earlier research upon equality in the labor market in Sweden: less divorces and more stable family life with equality.....	20
3.2	Previous research about modernization of the family in Norway –and its relevance for understanding the practices of professional women in Argentina.....	21
3.2.1	Modern spearheads or the last ascetics?.....	22
3.2.2	The other way around: women in Norway choosing to be housewives.....	25
3.2.3	The emotional work of becoming modern.....	27
3.3	A family structure in change.....	30
3.4	Summary.....	33

4	Theoretical Framework	35
4.1	Capability approach	35
4.1.1	Amartya Sen and the development of the capability approach.....	35
4.1.2	Martha Nussbaum and the capability approach	41
4.1.3	Research on breadwinner models and the provision of informal care: using the capability approach	45
4.1.4	Gender research using the capability approach	48
4.1.5	Work-life balance and capability approach	52
4.2	Structuration theory	56
4.3	Summary	62
5	Research methodology and data	64
5.1	Selection of data.....	64
5.2	Research design	65
5.2.1	Qualitative research method and semi-structured interviews	65
5.2.2	Semi-structured interview	65
5.3	Our starting point	68
5.4	Localization selection	70
5.5	The participants and their profiles	71
5.6	Data collection	72
5.7	Data analysis	73
5.7.1	Thematic analysis.....	73
5.8	Strengths and limitations.....	74
5.8.1	The use of interpreter	76
5.8.2	Ethical considerations	77
5.9	Summary	78
6	Successful women of Argentina	79
6.1	Four women - four stories.....	79
6.1.1	Yulia (53): A successful professional woman	80
6.1.2	Anna (38): A Family oriented woman	83
6.1.3	Carla (36): A woman with high ambitions for women’s equality	87
6.1.4	Beata (42): A woman who stood up for her rights.....	90
6.1.5	Summary of the interviews	92

6.2	Successful women in Argentina: combining their roles	92
6.3	What are the women balancing?	95
6.3.1	Children and care responsibility	95
6.3.2	Husband / boyfriend (and mother-in-law)	95
6.3.3	Having an education: and supervisors and mentors.....	97
6.3.4	Work and career life.....	98
6.4	Summary	99
7	Work and everyday life	101
7.1	Work-life.....	101
7.1.1	The choice of working	101
7.1.2	Being independent	103
7.1.3	Having a proper work contract: or choosing not to	104
7.1.4	Men in the workplace.....	105
7.1.5	Satisfaction at work.....	107
7.1.6	Workhours.....	107
7.1.7	Flexibility at work.....	108
7.2	Typical day and spare time	109
7.2.1	Everyday life	109
7.2.2	Social life	110
7.2.3	Physical activities.....	110
7.3	Summary	111
8	Raising children and a society in change	112
8.1	Importance of having family.....	112
8.1.1	Importance of having children	112
8.1.2	Maid as family?.....	113
8.2	The possibility of having children and work at the same time	115
8.2.1	Law	115
8.2.2	Perception of possibility	116
8.2.3	Having flexibility	116
8.2.4	Question of social class.....	117
8.3	Family arrangements.....	118
8.3.1	Husband / boyfriend participating at home?	118
8.3.2	Help with children from other family members	119

8.3.3	Help from maid	120
8.3.4	Kindergarten and daycare	120
8.3.5	Support from state and workplace	120
8.4	Changing towards a better reality for women?	121
8.4.1	Better – but not good enough.....	121
8.4.2	Generation change	122
8.4.3	Change	122
8.4.4	Women with more possibilities nowadays	123
8.4.5	Working parents.....	123
8.4.6	Teaching their own children	124
8.5	Summary	124
9	Analyzing the findings	125
9.1	Structuration theory	125
9.1.1	External structures	125
9.1.2	Internal Structures.....	127
9.1.3	Practices	130
9.1.4	Outcomes	133
9.2	The capability approach: adaptive preferences and conversion factors.....	135
9.2.1	The women’s choice and agency	136
9.2.2	The unpaid work - a choice or not?	137
9.2.3	The women`s work-life balance.....	142
9.2.4	Conversion factors	145
9.2.5	Adaptive preferences	147
9.3	Summary	149
10	Conclusion	150
10.1	General findings.....	150
10.1.1	Gender equality.....	151
10.1.2	Obligations, success and strategies to achieve work-life balance.....	151
10.1.3	A matter of having sufficient choices	153
10.1.4	Families in change and why gender equality is important.....	154
10.2	Superwomen: but for how long?.....	155
10.3	Future work and our reflections.....	156

References	158
Appendix 1 – Interview guide.....	163
Appendix 2 – Consent form	166
Appendix 3 – Approval from NSD	169

List of Figures

Figure 1: The five conceptual building blocks of the Capability Approach.....	36
Figure 2: A simplified model of the dynamic relationship between conditions for achieving gender equality (OR: work-life balance), the practices of women and achieved outcomes (adapted after Halvorsen and Hvinden 2013)	59

List of Tables

Table 1: Structuration theory	61
Table 2: Participant Overview	71

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Equality between men and women in the labor market, and with regards to domestic work, is a topical issue, and it is of importance in all parts of the world. While not all countries are in the same stage of the process of promoting or ensuring gender equality, it is safe to say that most countries and societies are in change. Women are taking over roles and positions that were traditionally reserved for men. The traditional family structure is in change.

Traditionally, men and women had different roles in the household. After the industrial revolution, what we now call the traditional female role emerged. The traditional role of women staying at home taking care of the household and the children, while men worked outside of the home earning money to provide for the family, is not very specific for one society. Neither is women getting paid employment outside of the house.

This also applies to the Latin-American context and culture, which some still will argue has a 'macho' culture, with a high degree of male dominance. However, Central- and South-America are areas in change, also when it comes to the position of women. Argentina does, at least from the outside, look like a country that has accomplished a lot when it comes to gender equality with a range of laws, and having women in high positions, as well as female presidents. However, we want to study how it is to be a woman, and building a career and a work-life outside of the home, while having children and family at home in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Women's agency matters at three levels according to The World development report, Gender Equality and Development (2012), made by The World Bank: It has intrinsic relevance for women's individual wellbeing and quality of life, it has instrumental importance for actions that improve the well-being of women and their families, and it is required if women are to play an active role in shaping institutions, social norms, and the well-being of their communities (The World Bank 2012).

In this thesis, we are doing research on women in the urban context of Buenos Aires, with a higher degree from the University. We want to know how they combine work-life with

family life, and how important it is for them to take up employment even after they have children.

As Argentina is a fairly young federal state, it is relatively easy to look into the history and thereby look at the development concerning women in the labor market. In a study done by Monserrat, Lassaga and D'Annunzio (2006), they interviewed successful women in Argentina, with success referring to high positions in the labor market. They found that many of the women did not measure their success from these positions, but rather through their family life (if divorced it meant they were not successful). However, the family structure has been changing during the last decades. The fertility rate has decreased at the same time, and the divorce rate has increased.

Dawn Foster (2015) claims that women's paid and unpaid work, both economic and socially, is rarely appreciated at the same level as men's work. Much of this is about the opportunities available to them. Women are likely to be employed in low-wage or unpaid work and subject to dismissal for getting married or having children. In many industries, female workers are denied their rights to regular pay and regular working hours, equal pay for equal work, permanent contracts, safe and non-hazardous work environments, and freedom of association. Sexual violence, harassment, and forced pregnancy tests occur too often as well (Foster 2015).

In the attempt to widen and improve women's economic empowerment globally, the focus on paid labor overlooks the problem of care work at home. Addressing heavy and unequal care is the only way of achieving more economic justice for women. The fact that women carry out most of the housework, and more childcare often means that paid labor is taken on in addition to the heavy burden of care work at home (Foster 2015).

Gender inequality also affects sleep, when it comes to working. Due to care duties, women sleep less than men do even when they are not participating in paid employment. Therefore, while unpaid care and work are undervalued, it also encroaches on women's leisure, and rest, and therefore health. This shows that it is not only regarding the economic differences between women and men, it is also about women being primary caregivers. Foster (2015) argues that to achieve full gender equality, it will be essential to facilitate women in getting the help they need regarding unpaid work as well (Foster 2015).

Women's right to work and equal rights at work are threatened, according to Foster (2015). Even privileged women have to contend with the gender pay gap, lack of family leave rights and maternity discrimination. Some women are forced to accept to have a flexible work with low-income, often without labor rights or social security, and at the same time perform the same duties when they get home, sacrificing their health and leisure (Foster 2015).

Policies that enable parents to combine work and care are critical for women to achieve economic independence and essential for any strategy aimed at improving productivity and economic growth. Paid parental leave, affordable childcare, flexible working conditions (for men and women), and a tax-transfer system that ensures that work is worthwhile are key drivers of labor market participation for females. This is not something specifically for Argentina and Argentinian women, but rather something of importance all over the world. However, Argentina has many dedicated women engaged in their rights, much has happened in this field in the last years, and it is important to question if everything is working the way it is supposed to and if it is beneficial.

1.2 Rationalities for the study and research questions

1.2.1 Rationalities for the study

In this chapter, we start by giving an overview over the different topics we focused on in the interviews, then we refer to the research questions.

1) Conditions of women's participation in employment.

In this study we look at what kind of workplaces highly educated women in Buenos Aires, Argentina are employed at and what they provide of help and support to facilitate the women staying employed even after having children. We also want to know what kind of benefits and help the state provides and what the laws and regulations are. More specifically, questions are whether men and women have the same positions, the same payments, and the same chances of being promoted.

2) Family life

In addition to that, we want to find out how their family life normally looks like, and if it is accepted to be divorced, or to live as a single mother. We want to examine if women that are married, or live together with their partner, experience gender equality at home, and how

important this is to them. We examine if the family structure is changing, and if so, in what ways.

3) How the relationship with colleagues, family and friends characterizes the experience of employment.

Furthermore, we want to examine the women's relationship with their supervisors and if they feel like they are able to speak up in case there is something they are not satisfied with. Moreover, if they have a good relationship with their colleagues and if there is any difference between the male and the female colleagues and how they perceive them.

4) Internal barriers and evaluation of their own opportunities

Finally, we want to know how they perceived their own opportunity to work and to build the career they want while having children and family. We want to examine if they believe it is possible for highly educated women in Argentina to take up employment outside of home while having small children or not, what barriers they face and how they overcome them.

1.2.2 Research questions

Main questions

- How do highly educated women in Buenos Aires, Argentina cope with both paid employment and family life?
- How important is gender equality for these women, and to what extent do they experience gender equality, both at home and at their workplaces?

Secondary questions

- What strategies do the women develop to combine paid and unpaid work?
- What measures are there, and what measures need to be implemented, to ensure that women in Argentina can get a sense of mastering everyday life that involves both having small children and domestic work at home, and having paid employment?
- Have the possibilities of combining employment and family life changed over the years?

1.3 How we ended up with this research and these research questions

The research questions and how we conducted the interviews ended up quite differently than initially thought. Therefore, we provide the necessary background information to explain our choices.

1.3.1 The beginning

On August the 18th we landed in Buenos Aires with high expectations and many written pages on what and how we wanted to do this research. We wanted to analyze the experiences of women working in grassroots economy based business. After the economic and political crisis in Argentina in 2001, thousands of different companies were abandoned by their owners with a big debt. This led to high unemployment rates and desperation for the people, but some of these companies (for instance different factories) became legally taken over and reopened by the employees themselves. In addition to that, after the severe economic crisis of 2002-2003, the idea about worker-run companies spread to a broad range of areas, for instance in food-industry, restaurants, hotels, health businesses and textile factories. This kind of cooperatives and worker-run factories are examples of grassroots economies, and there are several companies and factories like this still running in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Our idea was to spend around two weeks working with women working at ground level, and then interview them. Before we left, we talked to our supervisor at the Universidad de Belgrano, who told us it would be possible. Our first encounter with our supervisor proved how unpredictable the field of research could be, and that one must be prepared for challenges along the way.

We were told that it was not feasible after all, and that we could not get access to the factory. This meant that we had to restructure ourselves, and move away from the original plan. Our supervisor in Argentina was very helpful and said she could get us in touch with different women we could interview. Our new plan was now to interview women from different workplaces with children. In order to gather informants, in addition to the women we got in contact with through our supervisor, we used the snowball method. This involves the researcher using the first interviewees in to find more interviewees. As our supervisor put us in contact with highly educated women in high positions, it was clear that if we wanted a

broader picture of women in Buenos Aires we had to interview women from lower social classes as well.

We asked a woman working with sanitation at the university. She agreed to do the interview, but she had only ten minutes (which was not enough). We also asked the woman who cleaned at our house, but she did not have time either. It became more and more clear that getting in contact with and interviewing women from lower working class was difficult.

All of the women we met through our supervisor, were women with children and work, and it turned out eventually that they all had higher education. We were planning approximately 20 interviews in total and after we had completed 10 interviews, we decided to focus only on women with higher education. This meant losing the possibility to gain a more general picture of women and work-life balance in Buenos Aires, but it also meant being able to focus more on this group. The women we interviewed were in the ages from early 30s to late 70s. This made it possible to look at the differences between generations.

Our research plan had thus changed twice since going to Buenos Aires. After a while, we realized how interesting it was to interview women working in high positions in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as they all had a commitment to gender equality and women's rights. Their engagement made us understand the importance and relevance of the topic.

1.3.2 Women's agency matters

The women's ability to influence their lives matters. A person's ability to make effective choices and exercise control over his life is a key dimension of well-being. Women and men can contest and alter their conditions only if they are able to aspire to better outcomes, make effective choices, and take action to improve their lives. Agency determines the women's ability to build their human capital and access economic opportunities. Family formation decisions, especially about the timing of marriage and childbearing and the number of children, are critical for the women's investments in education. Indeed, delays in marriage are strongly associated with higher education, earnings, and health-seeking behavior (The World Bank 2012).

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

To underline the relevance of our thesis Chapter 2 continues with some background information from Argentina, and previous researches from Latin America. Chapter 3 provides more relevant research, but from the European context, to give an even clearer understanding of the topic's relevance. Chapter 4 provides a literature review of the theoretical framework guiding the thesis and discusses and explains concepts. Chapter 5 explains the research methodology used. Further Chapters 6, 7 and 8 give a systematic presentation of the findings before Chapter 9 discusses and analyzes them regarding the theoretical framework. At last, Chapter 10 presents the conclusions.

2 Background

2.1 History of maternity protection and women in the labor market in Argentina

As our thesis regards how women in Buenos Aires, Argentina, are combining employment with family life and having children, it is important to understand the context within. In the following we present the history of the maternity protection in Argentina, and give some background information about women in the labor market.

2.1.1 History of and today's maternity protection in Argentina

Since the last decades of the nineteenth century, the state of Argentina has been concerned with the social protection of women's reproductive capacity. This has led to population proposals to reduce high infant mortality rates, prevent the 'degeneration of the race' or to respond of the falling birth rate. This, combined with other calls for social reform, moral education of the population and improvement of the working-class living condition, further lead to growth of intervention by the State through policies designed to protect mothers (Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011).

On one hand, work has been conceived as a threat to the reproductive capacity of women because it delayed development, and reduced the capacity to conceive and bear children. In addition to this, it had a negative impact on infant mortality, since it prevented breastfeeding on demand and the mothers' ability to perform their role of socializing, teaching moral values and mediating conflicts. Despite this widespread disapproval of female labor, the increase of women entering the labor market created the need to legislate and regulate salaried work by women to make it compatible with motherhood (Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011).

Pregnancy, delivery and child rearing is another area of state intervention. In Argentina, unlike many other countries, the implemented policies favored a pro-maternal mode. During the middle of the twentieth century, this shifted its focus to the care of the children on the expense of protecting mothers. In the 1920s and the 1930s there was a growth of ideas designed to protect the family and get women out of the labor market. One of the most important was the creation of family salary that would allow men to support their wives and children and thereby giving women the opportunity to leave the workforce. This led to

reinforcing the domination of the husband by the family relying on his salary. Children were at the same time protected at the expense of the mothers with a broad range of factors. For instance, with the organization of national health and welfare system for mothers and children, many institutions which controlled married people's health through pre-nuptial examinations, protecting single mothers and abandoned children and by educating women in the 'art' of being mothers (Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011).

In Europe, the legislation protecting pregnant workers is dated back to the nineteenth century, but in Latin America, this privilege was only recognized in the beginning of the twentieth century. The framework of this in Argentina is similar to the Chilean and the Brazilian models in its attempt to protect the health of infants more than the health of women.

Law 5.291 (Argentina 1907) is the first normative attempt to protect the reproductive capacity of female workers. This law contained that working women must have seats, and allowed women to stop working up to four weeks before giving birth and up to six weeks after delivery. Their employers had to keep their jobs open during this time if needed, but women were not required to take the time off and were not paid during the time off (Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011).

Law 11.317, passed in September 1924, prohibited women from working for four weeks after giving birth, and it gave an authorized leave four weeks before the birth with a presentation of medical certificate (but not with payment). Moreover, it established that women could not be dismissed because of being pregnant, and that they should be allowed to return to their jobs. It permitted the mothers to breastfeed their children during two breaks of half-hour and stated that establishments with more than fifty female workers, must have a day care center for children under the age of two. However, many women did not take maternity leave due to not being able to survive without their wages, and brought their children to work after birth (Nari 2004 in Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011). There were no employers that bothered to provide the day nurseries, and even the state, which employed women, did not comply with this law. The only aspect that was actually implemented was the obligation to keep a job open for the mothers who had taken the short maternity leave (Marpons 1935 in Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011).

In 1934, law 11.932 that granted mothers of infants two half-hours breaks to breastfeed, was finally approved. Law 11.933 of October 15, 1934 gave entitlement for women working in any commercial or industrial establishment (rural or urban), free access to doctor or midwife for four weeks before delivery, the payment of a maternity allowance equivalent to the full wage, and the right to return to the former job.

On April 15th, 1936, the Maternity Fund was created (regulated in law 11.933). Benefits for members were such as prenatal care, home visits by social service, delivery in maternity hospital, care of the mother and the newborn in clinics and a cash allowance to support the child and the mothers, which was equivalent to two and a half months of wages. This insurance was given some modifications with law 12.339, the most important being that women earning less than 2.60 pesos a day or 65 pesos a month being exempted from contributing to the fund. However, there were many limits of this legislation, and the Maternity Fund had 32,212 members around 1942. 53 percent were living around Buenos Aires (giving these women the best benefits).

Proposals for organizing social security systems came after the Second World War. The main idea was that people's protection, both at the workplace and biologically, should be ruled by the principles of social solidarity. In the beginning, there were no suggestions or measures that protected the job safety and security to women within this social security system. After an administrative reorganization, the Maternity Fund, with 400,000 female members, was divided into two different bodies (Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011). It was under the Maternity and Infancy Board on the one hand, and on the other, by the Institute Nacional de Prevision Social (National Institute for Social Security). This was under the administrative aegis of the Preventive Medicine Board.

Throughout the development of the new systems, many different laws evolved that were steps towards the long-desired project of 'social insurance', and the National Institute for Social Security was made by decree. The Maternity Fund, which had 400,00 female members was overseen by the two bodies that were made (Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011), both depending on the National Institute for Social Security, and under the administrative edge of the Preventive Medicine Board.

What seemed to be the biggest problem was women not covered by this maternity insurance and a big topic was whom it was supposed to protect. In the legal and health care proposals analyzed, in summary, the whole protection of the working women lost its focus and became subsumed in discussions about the protection from certain ‘universal’ elements. We saw that in the discussions, motherhood was not considered one of the issues of importance (Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011).

In the early decades of the twentieth century women were striving to be recognized as a significant part of the labor market. Motherhood could not be considered an illness, and therefore needed its own legal framework. Today’s maternity leave of 45 days before and 45 days after delivery came together with extending the benefits of the law to all working women (also domestic workers). Mandating the installation of infant nurseries and kindergartens in all businesses, giving medical care free of cost to both mother and child, and a full payment of wages instead of a salary percentage. This came in the bill in 1953, from the procommunist groups of Argentine Women and the Pro-Democratization and Union Independence Movement. In addition, in the decree no. 1602 of October 2009, the government of Christina Fernandez passed another key measure of the social protection system: a Universal Assignment per child for Social Protection, in 2011 this measure was extended to pregnant women (Golbert 2011 in Biernat and Ramacciotti 2011).

Currently, after taking out the altogether 3 months of paid leave, the mothers can choose to return to work, or to extend their leave for a period of three to six months without payment. This entitlement requires that the woman must be employed for more than one year. Men are entitled to two days of parental leave (Angeloinfo).

2.1.2 Women in the labor market in Argentina

Women’s work, both economic and socially, is rarely appreciated as much as men's work. Much of this is regarding the opportunities available to them. Women are more likely to be employed in low-wage or unpaid work, and subject to dismissal for getting married or having children. In many industries, female workers are denied their rights to regular pay and regular working hours, equal pay for equal work, permanent contracts, safe and non-hazardous work environments, and freedom of association. Sexual violence, harassment and forced pregnancy tests, occur too often as well (International Labour Right Forum).

In Latin America, including Argentina, the legal position of women was traditionally based on Spanish and Roman law. They were property of the men in the family. Married women were under the authority of their husbands, while single women were under the authority of their fathers. In colonial Argentina, with the arrival of the first Spanish conqueror in the 1520's, the traditions were not always reachable, but many saw them as ideal and women were not allowed to hold any political administrative positions, and they could not inherit land grants. In the late 18th and early 19th century, these attitudes started changing due to the influence of foreign cultures (Mercer 1998).

However, Argentina has a long history of female leaders, such as presidents and other important political positions. In addition to that, many women have had a big influence in the political issue and in business. Considering, the overwhelming degree of machismo in Argentina, its history of politically active women is rather surprising according to Adam Mendel (2011). In 1947, Juan Perón managed to pass the bill granting suffrage to women, at the persistent urging of his wife Eva Peron. One of the main reasons people believed Perón was passing the bill was self-motivated: his wife was a popular icon, and promised to secure much of the women's vote for him. Another interesting critique is that the Argentine citizenry only began to support the bill once the popular Evita pushed it, and that earlier suffragettes lacked the feminine guile required to sway public opinion (Mendel 2011).

Furthermore, Mendel (2011) claims that the expansion of the franchise to women market had a significant landmark for Argentina, and twice in the past century, a woman held the highest political office. In 1974, Peron's second wife, Isabel, assumed the office following Juan's death and ruled through 1976. More recently, the first elected female president is the former head of state Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, who ran for office following the death of her husband, President Nestor Kirchner. In addition to that, Argentina has had several other women in prominent political roles. However, despite the significant influence of female political figures, this legacy is not an one-dimensional story of feminine political independence. Mendel argues that appearance and family connections still seem to be critical to the success of women in Argentine politics (Mendel 2011).

A list of the prominent women of Argentine politics today confirms this. To begin, there is former president Cristina Kirchner (2011-2015). Despite her undeniable status as a powerful political figure, there are many considering her presidency a continuation of her husband's

regime, and referring to their successive presidencies as the time of “los Kirchners” is not uncommon. It is also noteworthy that when discussing the two, “Kirchner” refers to Nestor, while “Cristina” was the president. Hilda de Duhalde, another former president's wife, ran against Cristina in an earlier senatorial election. Another example is Elisa Carrió, a former beauty queen and long-time politician who was opposing Cristina in the next elections. Women have made significant strides and held power in Argentine politics, however, despite their presence: it is still a masculine system in a masculine society (Mendel 2011).

2.1.3 Women in the labor market and what we want to examine

Women’s right to work and to equality in the labor market are under pressure. Even privileged women must contend with the gender pay gap, lack of family leave rights and maternity discrimination. Some women are forced to accept a flexible work with low wage, often without labor rights or social security and at the same time perform the same duties they have always done when they get home, sacrificing their leisure and often their health as well (Donald 2014).

Even if women are included in politics and business, the idea that household and family obligations is mainly the responsibility of the woman is still strong. At the same time, women are more frequently taking university degrees than men are, and career and employment are becoming of more importance in women’s life. This is one of the reasons we asked the question: How are women in Argentina most likely to be able to combine paid work and family obligations?

To answer the main question, we examined some more detailed sub questions:

- What are the policy measures promoting gender equality, and to which extent?
- What strategies do women in Argentina use to continue working in the ordinary labor market after they have children?
- Under which conditions are women in Argentina most likely to benefit from existing policy measures to promote gender equality?

This thesis examines how important paid work is for women, and how highly educated women with children are able to combine employment and small children. We consider what the government of Argentina does to ensure that women are not forced to leave their job

when having children, and to what degree the labor market have gender equality. Further, we try to find patterns in the strategies the women have, to combine work and family, and whether there are any differences among the different age groups.

To examine women's opportunities for and how they achieve healthy work-life balance, we use the capability approach and its definitions of what a person is free to do and achieve for reaching whatever goals and values the person considers important. We look at how women can cope with both traditional housework, childcare and paid employment outside of the household. We also use it to examine the degree of gender equality both at home and at work. Further we also use structuration theory in the analysis.

There is earlier research on the topic of women and empowerment in different countries, and Lucia Hanmer and Jeni Klugman (2015) present different researches on the topic (women in developing countries). One thing that seems to be important for the feeling of empowerment is employment and work outside of the house. Having a job and income of your own is crucial for surviving without a man. In the traditional household, wives stayed at home doing the housework and taking care of the children, while husbands took up work outside of the home and provided for the family. This could lead to women not being able to provide for themselves, and being very dependent on their husbands (Hanmer and Klugman 2015).

There have also been several other feminist researches on the topic of women in labor market. In general, most of them highlight the importance of equality in the labor market, and of a society allowing women to work in order to reach gender equality.

We now continue with previous research, which has both been inspirational for our study, and can help us underpin our findings.

2.2 Previous research from Argentina and Latin America

As Argentina is a country located in Latin America, we consider previous research from all of Latin America, and of course especially from Argentina. However, it is important to keep in mind that our research is in the urban context of Buenos Aires, and only among highly educated women. For instance, the interviewees certainly differ a lot from women without education in rural areas.

2.2.1 Women and success in Argentina

Women in Argentina, as in the rest of the world, are taking up employment in a gradually larger scale. By law, women in Argentina are entitled to maternity leave, both paid and unpaid, and their workplace are obliged to keep their position open during the time they choose to stay home with the baby. In addition to that, they are entitled to breastfeed at work in the first months if necessary. The government is required by law to have at least 40 percent women, and Argentina has a history of several female presidents.

As all of the interviewees were highly educated, and in many ways were very successful, looking into other researches about successful women from Argentina is very relevant.

Research by Monserrat, Lassaga and D'Annunzio (2006) about successful Argentinian women, found that many of the successful women did not measure their success based on their work and achievement in the professional world, but rather on their family life. For instance, the divorced women seemed to feel less successful, regardless of their positions, than the ones that were still married to the father of their children. One of the divorced women in their research, answered the question if she felt successful: “No, *I had only one family and because the family broke down, I could not consider that a success.*” In addition, spending time with family and children was very important, and if they did not have enough time for this, they felt guilt and perceived themselves as less successful.

If family is generally most important to women in Argentina to feel successful, it might be hard for them to feel successful in higher positions as this often requires a lot of time away from the family. However, this research concludes that successful women in Argentina today who have achieved their goals have proven that success is feasible without sacrificing one's family life. Nowadays women in Argentina in general have a higher life expectancy, and get higher and more advanced degrees than men (Monserrat, Lassaga and D'Annunzio 2006).

We chose to use the question about whether the women feel successful in our interviews as well, and if women in general value family as high as the interviewees.

2.2.2 Family context of Cohabitation and Single Motherhood in Latin America

After looking at previous research about successfully women, finding that feeling success can be related to family life, we wanted to consider family structures in Argentina. We found that this, as in the rest of the world, is in change.

Elsteve, García-Román and Lesthaeghe (2012) have traced the shift happening in the patterns of household formations of young women in 14 different Latin American countries (one of them being Argentina) from the late 1960s. They use data from censuses collected between 1970 and 2007. There has been a large increase in cohabitation, and there is a rise in the number of young single mothers. Moreover, there is a question on whether families continue to be located in three-generation families, or similar types of extended households, or if these new feature occurs in the context of neolocal residence and nuclear families. The last would arguable be more consistent with the notion of a second demographic transition. As our research looks into women and work-life balance, and we found this research relevant as it looks into family contexts of Latin America and Argentina.

This article focuses on young women (25-29 years old) and the shifting situation they are in over time. The rise of cohabitation and the concomitant shift away from marriage in Latin America has been well documented (Elsteve, García-Román and Lesthaeghe 2012).

Among the 14 different countries, Argentina has one of the highest rates of single mothers living in extended or composite households (73, 4 percent, against only 40 percent in Puerto Rico). These numbers are not as high for married or cohabiting couples or mothers, where the numbers are between 19,7 and 28,3 percent, and lower than many of the other Latin American countries. These numbers imply that more than one out of five couples, and that about three out of four single mothers live in an extended household (Elsteve, García-Román and Lesthaeghe 2012). These are general numbers for the whole country, and for women between 25-29 years old, probably being a bit different among families in the capital, and among the women we interviewed.

Different researches show that single mothers face conflicts between caring for children and work, they suffer from the lack of social capital, and almost universally they are at a considerably higher risk of living in poverty (Elsteve, García-Román and Lesthaeghe 2012). In Latin America and the Caribbean, the problems that single mothers face have always been

acute, and the high rate of single motherhood is one of the reasons why Latin American income inequalities have remained so big (Gindling and Oviedo 2008 in Elsteve, García-Román and Lesthaeghe 2012).

The rise in cohabitation over the last decades has also contributed to a growing number of women with a higher probability of becoming single mothers. These numbers of single mothers are however, according to the numbers used in this research, dependent upon education level. Especially in Argentina, very dependent upon education. Single mothers, in the age group of 25-29 years old, constitute 15,4 percent of women with primary or less, against only 2,9 among those with completed tertiary or university. However, the numbers for women with children in the same age group show a much smaller difference between the education levels. Single mothers represent 19, 4 percent for those with primary or less, against 15, 0 for those with completed tertiary / university, when looking at only women with children (numbers from 2001, Elsteve, García-Román and Lesthaeghe 2012). The big difference in the numbers of all women and all mothers, indicates that less of the women with higher education have children at this age, compared to the women with lower education.

In this research, they focused on women between the age of 25 and 29, because, they argue that many of the crucial transitions either have already occurred before that age, or in this age bracket (Elsteve, García-Román and Lesthaeghe 2012).

We interviewed women of higher ages, living in the urban context of Buenos Aires, but we still found it interesting to look at these numbers and consider the changes in family structure happening in Latin America, also in Argentina, and to compare these to the participants in our study.

2.2.3 Married women and work in Buenos Aires

After considering previous researches about women and success, and about changing family context, we will now present and summarize an earlier research about married women and work in Buenos Aires and Mexico City.

Marcela Cerrutti (2002) did a comparative study about employment among married women in Buenos Aires and Mexico City, using interviews. She argues that the female labor force

participation in Latin America has grown rapidly during the past decade. Furthermore, she says that even if a significant number of women frequently enter and leave the labor force, women do not know about the consequences and the determinants of this behavior. Studying these dimensions is important because it can serve as mechanism for the gender inequalities in both labor market, and in other areas of social life (Cerrutti 2002).

Cerrutti (2002) finds that women married to male heads of household, are more likely to take up employment of their own in Buenos Aires than in Mexico City. Moreover, in Buenos Aires, she argues that family circumstances affect the interviewees' labor forces, with the lack of reliable and affordable child care, with the employment instability of the husband's, and consequently through the economic contribution to the household from the husband. The labor market conditions are the other factors relevant to women's labor trajectories. Types of jobs and the sector in which the woman is working, are two important factors. A third factor is the economic situation at the moment she was looking for work in the labor market. The employers' prejudice against hiring married women that has children is a final factor.

In this research, there are participants with different patterns in the labor market, from both Mexico City and Buenos Aires. Most relevant to our research are the participants from the middle class, Buenos Aires, that have worked almost non-stop, as this is the story of most of the participants. Cerrutti (2002) writes, that since they first started, these middle class married women almost never interrupted working.

These women constitute almost half of the middle class married women in Buenos Aires. Many have spent 10 years or more, working as white-collar employees in state offices. These women do not have very small children at home and they have completed their reproductive lives already. Their husbands are currently, and have been for a while, in a very unstable labor situation, and these women, with stable careers, are currently the main economic providers in their households. Furthermore, these women felt that they had to be the stable workers, to ensure a basic standard of living, allowing their husbands to take chances in the business world.

These women achieve labor stability, by working in administrative tasks in the public sector that can provide a secure paycheck every month, labor benefits and a certain flexibility in the schedule or else by being a key employee in a successful sector of the private economy, for

instance private social services. They also made domestic arrangements, relying on the support of others to take care of the domestic responsibility. Their mothers and maids have been the main providers of this support, especially when their children were very young (Cerrutti 2002).

Furthermore, these women cannot picture themselves not working, and their work has never been a source of conflict with their husbands. Interestingly enough, all of them declare that they prefer to have worked fewer hours (especially when their children were young), despite showing high labor force attachment. (Cerrutti 2002).

Since the interviewed women are mostly middle class (or higher), and many of them are married, we found this interesting to look at. Especially the part about how these women were seeking stable work with a secure income, and the need of help from mothers and maids. In addition to that, how the women both cannot picture themselves not working, at the same time as they would have liked to work less hours.

2.3 Summary

Argentina has a history of prominent women, and many laws and regulations that promote women in the labor market. Furthermore, similarly to other Latin-American countries, Argentina has a history of a male dominated culture, research showing that family life is still very important to women. Nowadays, the country is in change, both in terms of family contexts and gender roles and equality.

3 European research on the topic

Argentina is, just like Australia, Canada, and the United States, considered a country of immigrants. More than 6.2 million Europeans emigrated to Argentina from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, only the United States having a higher number of European immigrants at that time. Mostly because of this, Argentina's population doubled every two decades. Most of the population in present Argentina are descendants of the colonial-era settlers and the 19th and 20th-century immigrants from Europe, and as high as 86.4 percent of the present population in Argentina identify themselves as European (Khan 2009). This indicates that looking at Europe and European research could be almost just as relevant as Latin-American studies. Another reason for choosing to look at European research upon the topic is that we are coming from the European context, and this affects our studies in any case. In addition to that, all the research we examined from Europe looks into gender roles, equality, and families in change. This is in many ways similar to what is happening in the Argentinian context, and as Europe is a bit ahead with research on these topics, it is relevant to consider.

3.1 Earlier research upon equality in the labor market in Sweden: less divorces and more stable family life with equality

There are many types of research upon women in the labor market, gender equality, and division of paid and unpaid work in Northern European countries. Research from Argentina has shown that women define their success out of family life, at the same time as they engage with equality both at home and at work. Thereby we found a research done by Livia Oláh and Michael Gähler (2004) upon Gender Equality Perception, Division of Paid and Unpaid Work and Partnership Dissolution in Sweden (Stockholm University) engaging. They found that an increasing proportion of both men and women now prefer gender egalitarianism. They further go into the interplay between the gender role attitudes and behaviors with regards of sharing paid and unpaid work with partners, and partnership stability.

Due to an increase in female employment and a decrease in gender labor specialization, attitudes towards gender role have changed, also in the professional world: but still, market gender division of labor continues. In this research, they study the interplay between attitudes in individual gender role and the behavior when it comes to sharing paid and unpaid work with one's partner, and the implications for partnership stability (Oláh and Gähler 2014).

Sweden has a long experience of the model of dual-earning, and a range of policies that support female labor-force participation and promoting men's active engagement in family obligations. Oláh and Gähler (2014) tested these two hypotheses: the gender egalitarian model, that gender egalitarianism in attitudes and behavior per se strengthens partnership stability, and the attitude-behavior consistency model, that consistency in individual attitudes and couple behavior (both egalitarian and traditional), increases couple stability. They used data from Swedish Young Adult Panel Study conducted in 1999, 2003, and in 2009: and their result favors the attitude-behavior consistency model of marriage. They find that there is no difference in dissolution risk among the consistent egalitarian and the consistent traditional individuals. Both categories exhibit lower risks than people holding gender egalitarian views but dividing workload with their partner in a gender-traditional way.

Despite the trend of men doing less paid and more unpaid work than previously, and women doing the opposite (Gershuny 2000, in Oláh and Gähler 2014), women are still doing the biggest share of the domestic tasks (Bygre, Gähler and Nermo 2004: Sayer 2005: in Oláh and Gähler 2014). This Swedish study shows that if the father took parental leave with the first child, parents display a significantly lower risk of couple dissolution. In an American study, they found that husbands' share of housework increases marital happiness, and this links to divorce risk (Oláh and Gähler 2014).

We found this research relevant, as women of Buenos Aires, Argentina, are engaged with equality in society, at the same time as the family is extremely important. If the findings of this research apply in other contexts (such as Buenos Aires), having equality at home supports and strengthen the family life. This could be used as an argument for the relevance of gender equality.

3.2 Previous research about modernization of the family in Norway –and its relevance for understanding the practices of professional women in Argentina

Helene Aarseth is a social researcher from Norway, who has done a lot of research on the family's modernization and the changes in gender roles and relations in Norway. Her work has in many ways inspired us, both in the choice of topic and for what to look for in our research. She conducted a study about high-educated middle-class couples in Norway, and

what it is that motivates their changes toward an equal gender relation. Besides, she looked at what drives elite families from the financial world in the 'rich ghettos' of Oslo, back into a more traditional gender role practice.

We found both of these studies relevant, as the research we looked into from Argentina and Latin-America indicates a gradually change towards equality in the labor market and at home, but also how important family and family life still is for women. The participants in our research are in general high-educated middle class women. Aarseth (2010) shows that in many ways the Norwegian society is not as different from the Argentinian as one might suppose. First, the research regarding the middle class and their support of the equality project, but also her other research, in which she questions if the equalized culture is threatened by the globalization of the labor market. In the latter, she looks into how women in Norway choose to move away from the equality project and stay at home as housewives.

3.2.1 Modern spearheads or the last ascetics?

'Modern spearheads or the last ascetics' is the name of Aarseth's research upon 'the equal and educated middle class' (2010). She argues that this 'equal and educated middle class' and their support of the Norwegian equality project, seems to be motivated by a unique form of do-it-yourself thought, which is rooted in the ethics of the Protestant church and goes way back in Norwegian history. Furthermore, she says that in the meeting with the globalized family and work cultures, this idea stands at a crossroad: it might just as well be a dying phenomenon, as something that is staying. By this 'do-it-yourself' thought she is referring to how these families choose not to have help in the house (for instance maid or au-pair), and neither have help when they are renovating: they want to do everything themselves (Aarseth 2010).

Within the last 40-50 years, the development has gradually moved towards more gender equal family forms. In the Norwegian context, this implies both that the mothers should be taking up full-time employment, and that men, with the help of governmental welfare support, should take more responsibility within the family. This could be described as a double welfare model. It is something found in the Nordic countries, and not so much in other parts of the world (Ellingsæter and Leira 2006 in Aarseth 2010). Even if this development might be slow, it is clear that mothers work more and that fathers do more of

the family obligations (Kitterød 2002 and 2007 in Aarseth 2010). When looking further into this statistics, this double equality model has the highest rate in couples where both have a higher education. The same group has the highest numbers of fathers taking out parental leave, and we experience a more caring oriented masculinity. One could argue that this educated middle class appears as the 'modern ones' that starts the trend, while the others, more traditional ones, are gradually following this development. However, there are reasons to put a question mark at this concept (Aarseth 2010).

Even if the general picture is that society in Norway becomes equal and modern, signs of competing tendencies appear. Big newspapers, such as 'Dagens Næringsliv,' follow and show interest in the new 'trend' regarding women that again want to give their life to children and household activities. This phenomenon does mostly apply to an economic elite, but there are also signs of a bigger backlash against the equality and its time rush with too much to do, in too little time. Furthermore, there is a new activation of the dream of natural motherhood, with many children, long-term breastfeeding and more time and energy (Ellingsæter 2004, in Aarseth 2010). We also experience a gradually increase in the use of hired help in the house, which could also arguably be linked to the need of more time and energy (Kitterød 2009, in Aarseth 2010). There are still, compared to other countries, very few families in Norway using paid help in the household, but from 2000 and up to 2008 there was an increase of six times more au pairs' (Aarseth 2010). Arguably this shows that it is becoming more 'normal' to have help at home, and help directly with the children, even if this 'educated middle class' is not much represented in this statistics.

Aarseth (2010) asks the question of what drives the educated middle class into the support of the Norwegian double equality model, and how sustainable it really is in a more globalized Norway. Furthermore, she asks whether these families in the future in bigger scale will go back to the traditional housewife family model. Alternatively, whether this group, the primers in the Norwegian equality project, in the future starts the process where it is increasingly accepted to use paid help at home. In this way, they might be able to do more of the 'enriching activities' both at home and at work, and let others do the cleaning in the house, take care of the sick children and help them with their homework (Aarseth 2010).

Aarseth (2010) bases her further discussions in this article on a qualitative interview study of nine pairs of parents that are very much representative of the 'Norwegian equality model.'

Both work full-time in higher positions at the same time as both take the same amount of responsibility for the everyday life in the family. Something unique about the couples, might be how the man is taking more responsibility at home than the majority does.

In other Western countries, where these types of families with two working parents are represented, it is more usual to leave significant parts of the domestic work to others. Some researchers have argued that in these cases the family is left without meaning and contents and that the work becomes the arena for self-expression, cohesion, and confirmation (Hochschild 1997 in Aarseth 2010). Aarseth does, however, find a very different pattern in the Norwegian double equalized families. Here she finds an investment both at work and at home. At home, it is primary the parental role they invest in. The children are not left to themselves, or to expensive free time activities, and the parents play a very active part of their children's life. Besides, as mentioned, they have a 'do-it-yourself' mentality in all layers, from cooking homemade meals, renovating the cabin, or taking the children to soccer training.

Aarseth (2010) outlines that parents do not only take the children to soccer training or theater groups, they are the football trainers or the leaders of the theater group. Maybe this is why they do not loose 'the meaning' of the time they spend at home and other arenas that are not related to work (Aarseth 2010)? Anyhow, the idea of not having paid help in the family, is probably also very much rooted in the Norwegian culture: as one of the fathers puts it "If you are going to buy prepared food and have others wash your clothes, what are you going to do at home in the end? Why are you at home?" This seems to be the general mentality: why would you spend time at home if there is nothing to do? In Norwegian history, having servants has mainly been reserved for rather wealthy families (Aarseth 2010).

Furthermore, the couples in this research tell about bigger renovations projects, either at home or at their cabin. They often spend long weekends and holidays working hard, and one of the women even described that she had trouble enjoying when they went to Rome, as everything 'came on silver platters.' She saw more meaning in spending the weekend working hard than just relaxing (Aarseth 2010).

We found this specific research interesting, as equality at home and at the workplace is the goal for most of the women. They are also mostly women from the middle class, all with

higher education, living in the city of Buenos Aires. While the families from Norway in this research are very much about doing everything yourself, she questions whether this will be possible in the future. Due to how the labor market is in change and how working in big global companies makes you compete with people from all over the world, it might not be sustainable. In Argentina, the culture in this sense is very different, and having a maid and help at home, is something even women choosing to stay at home often have. When having paid help at home is broadly accepted, it could be an advantage in combining work and family, as it could give more opportunities to work longer hours, and get more spare time at home.

3.2.2 The other way around: women in Norway choosing to be housewives

Threatening to the do-it-yourself mentality, and the equalized culture where both men and women work and do the same amount of work in the house, could be the gradual globalization of the labor market. International and multilateral companies expect more work and longer hours; in the end, the time to do everything yourself might not be enough. This might be one of the backgrounds of what Aarseth (2014) found in another research. Here she considered the finance capitalism and found that in the higher social classes, there is a development back towards the woman being a housewife. She describes how mothers work hard to create a 'free zone' far away from work and everyday life at home (Aarseth 2014).

In the article named 'The gender romantic of financial capitalism. A study of business elite families in Norway', Aarseth (2014) explores a family culture, found among financial intermediaries, in the comparative gender equal Norwegian society. She did a research using free association narrative interview study, of 20 parents. All parents came from families where one or both holds senior positions as partners, investors, investment managers or CEOs in capital-intensive enterprises, primarily within corporate finance. Most of these families have a traditional gender division of work, where the mother mostly takes care of the everyday life of the household. Aarseth (2014) argues, "This gender family culture with its nurturing mother and cult of domesticity can be seen as an emotional respond to specific requirements in financial jobs which cannot be fully accounted for in terms of time bind issues."

A family model with gender divisions on the tasks seems to be more common in the financial world than elsewhere. The two income families are growing, both as a practice and as a norm in the Norwegian society. Fewer women define themselves as 'housewives,' but men of the financial world elite have more often partners who choose to focus on the household and the families. In the couples of Aarseth's research (2014), both the men and the women had a higher education, and most of the women worked full time, in top positions within the finance world, until they had children. Nowadays women either do not work, or they work part time or/and from home. They all described a 'change of focus' after having children. Their career became less necessary, and many did not view it as possible to work as much as they did, and at the same time be the parent they wanted to be (Aarseth 2014).

In the interviews Aarseth (2014) did with these women, they describe an everyday life in which the husband and father is mostly gone during the week and how they 'check in' again on Friday afternoon. Women love the weekends and the holidays, but if the man suddenly comes home early on a weekday, they even call it 'disturbing' for their routines. These women have a clear structure for their children, and when the fathers put on a late-night movie, or give them candy outside of the meals, it is not doing their parenting project any good.

The upper-class woman, working at home, is often seen as someone living far from real life, someone who can afford to stand on the outside of society, and seen as an over privileged woman whose everyday life is shopping, home decoration, manicure and lunches with friends. She might, however, regret her choice if she is without any income of her own, and a smaller pension, for instance, if she gets divorced. These women are not a very usual phenomenon in the Norwegian society: most of the housewives (4 percent of the Norwegian women) have a lower education and a big caring responsibility (Kitterød and Rønsen 2011 in Aarseth 2014). Aarseth (2014) argues that these upper-class women married to men working in finance, who stays at home, still should not be seen as a curiosity in the Norwegian society. They should rather be viewed as an answer, possibly also an agent, for a finance capitalism dynamic, which is important much further than in the finance world itself.

It could be argued that upper-class housewives are within a renaissance. Internationally, especially in the USA, they are nowadays talking about the phenomenon 'opting out women' (Stoner 2007: Jones 2012, in Aarseth 2014). Women in the finance world stop focusing on

their careers and get more family oriented when they have children. The standard explanation of this is that the requirements for top jobs there are less compatible with family life than other jobs. The discussion goes about whether women themselves want to give their life to family, or if the gender-based expectations force them to do so. We also experience a bit of this opting out phenomena in the Norwegian welfare society. A significant number of women with this kind of elite education, fundamental for a career in the financial world, end up putting their time and effort into the family, rather than the career, after having children (Halrynjo and Lyng 2009 and 2010, in Aarseth 2010).

This study can arguably show us two things: How globalization and high requirement at work in many ways do not allow for two parents working full time while having children. Due to the international competition, national laws and regulations that facilitate having children and work are not always enough. However, it could also indicate that not all women want to work, and they can be satisfied with being at home if they have the financial possibility to do so. Maybe the equality model does not always have to be right at all life stages.

We found this study relevant for our study, as one of our research questions is how important it is for women to continue working after having children. Studies such as this one arguably show that having the same obligations at home and at work is not always linked to the experience of having a good life.

3.2.3 The emotional work of becoming modern

Another article, built upon research also done by Helene Aarseth (2016) with others, is “Conflicts in the habitus: the emotional work of becoming modern.” We chose to look at this research as well, precisely because of the concept of ‘becoming modern’ – which is what the women we interviewed in Buenos Aires are working towards as well. Our research is about work-life balance, about how women can combine their old traditional obligations of being a housewife with taking up employment, which is arguably something modern. This research looked at three generations of women becoming urban, moving from the countryside to the city, which is also the case for many of our interviewees, their mothers, and their grandmothers.

Aarseth, Layton, and Nielsen (2016) argue that the concept from Bourdieu, about habitus and specifically about the way the habitus transmits intergenerational, can become stronger by considering conflictual conscious and unconscious processes that emerge in relationships. They build their article upon in-depth interviews in a period of quick changes, with a socially mobile change of grandmother, mother, and daughter from the middle class of Norway. They look at the conflicts in the habitus and how they are rationally produced and can either motivate or hamper desires for change. The longitudinal study with the mobile generation chain of a grandmother, mother, and daughter, in the process of becoming middle class, is used to look at the emotional processing of conflicts in the habitus. Due to an expanding free-of-charge education system, a restructured labor market, and a rising material standard, many young people became urban and middle class in the time of a few decades around the Second World War (Aarseth, Layton and Nielsen 2016).

From the settled, rural grandmother to the highly cosmopolitan, self-reflective and individualized granddaughter, the traced trajectory suggests that conflicts in the habitus mobilized by the social change are generated in all types of relationships, like family, peer, and partners. They are passed down intergenerational, to be worked through again in changed social circumstances. This kind of conflicts can either hold back or facilitate change or do the both at the same time (Aarseth, Layton and Nielsen 2016).

The concept of habitus is always in constant change, responding to all new experience, but this change is not radical. This is because it works on the base on the premises that are established in an earlier state. We also, in general, meet these conditions similar to those who formed our habitus in the first place. Habitus is ‘perfectly adapted to the field without any conscious search for purposive adaptation’ in these situations (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 129, in Aarseth, Layton and Nielsen 2016, 150). However, social mobility or fast social transformations can entail conditions that substantially differ from the conditions in which the habitus was produced. Thereby the mental structure one has, might become out of place. These types of misfit can further produce dispositions towards clarity and critique, or can lead to a transformation, triggered by a new and broader consciousness (Bourdieu 2000 in Aarseth, Layton and Nielsen 2016).

Aarseth, Layton, and Nielsen (2016) argue that the subjectively experienced tensions in the habitus do not just come from a gross structural conflict and traditions, but also from how the

habitus is produced in the interaction with significant others (for instance parents). Contrasts in the relationship between objective and subjective structures live as conflicts inside a given, divided habitus. Thereby they are concerned with what the subjects bring to situations of misfit, and how already existing tensions in their habitus affect how the misfits are negotiated.

In this article, they use the example of three generations from the west coast of Norway; the grandmother, mother, and daughter. They show how they through the generations had moved from rural life in the countryside to a middle-class late-modern way of life. From the grandmother who moved from a big farm and into the city, to her granddaughter who has traveled a lot, lived in London and New York and taken a Ph.D. The habitus was at the beginning characterized by the rural economy, captured by the grandmother in terms of 'being frugal' and 'being sensible.' Then by the cosmopolitan and academic habitus of the granddaughter, characterized by the capital which is desirable in the late capitalism and its globalized economy (Sweetman 2003, Prieur et. al. 2008 in Aarseth, Layton and Nielsen 2016).

Even if these stories, from the grandmother to her granddaughter, are situated in a context where social mobility and change were expected and normal, they do not seem to fully fit into Bourdieu's theories about unremarked adjustments between the subjective and the objective structure. The process of becoming a middle-class family was far from unconflictual in these women's lives. The tension between the need for safety, and the search for excitement, marks their lives in many ways. Each of the three women keeps asking why they cannot be more free, bold and brave, and why they are held back by their sensibleness. However, they all seem to find ways to negotiate and to find their middle way between the new and the old (Aarseth, Layton and Nielsen 2016).

The grandmother who admired 'the city girls' and how brave they were, married the country boy who worked in the city. She moved to the city, but kept the country-side close. Her daughter who became a city girl, grew up in the city, but 'did not feel like the cool city girls; she spent her weekends in the countryside, feeling 'cooler,' and married a person from the countryside. Then the granddaughter, who went further and lived in London and New York, took higher education, and had a multicultural marriage; just to end up moving back to the town she grew up in with her husband (Aarseth, Layton and Nielsen 2016).

This research is relevant to our research, as these women in Buenos Aires also are working towards becoming 'modern.' They are going through this process with many of the same challenges as Norwegian women. In addition, many of them are originally from other parts of the country, and they moved to Buenos Aires to pursue their career dreams. This study and the concept of habitus are very relevant, when considering their life and difficulties.

3.3 A family structure in change

Our research largely concerns family life and family patterns. We want to find out how women organize their lives and all that this entails; work, children and husbands or divorces. As mentioned, family patterns are changing. Divorce is becoming more common, women are more active in the labor market, and they are more economically independent. However, it is still more common that men have the highest income within the household, and in most cases, they continue working, while women stay at home and take parental leave. Women are also responsible for most of the unpaid work.

Anne Lise Ellingsæter and Arnlaug Leira (2004) claim that most scientists have switched from talking about "family" in the singular to "families" in the plural. Some use "family" of groups of people who live in common households regardless of formal and legal definitions, while others use the term "family practices"; families are what they do (Morgan 1996 in Ellingsæter and Leira). The institution of the family changes over time and the individuals contribute to these changes through practicing family life in different ways (Ellingsæter and Leira 2004).

The family institution can be understood in two senses, both as a term of a construction and as an important social and economic institution. These add conditions for the organization of work and the design of social policy. The family is institutionalized through family legislation and welfare policy. The public constitution of the family favors some particular forms of family organization: «The state performs countless constituting acts which constitutes family identity as one of the most powerful principles of perception of the social world and one of the most real social units» (Bourdieu 1996 in Ellingsæter and Leira 2004).

The conventional notion of a contradiction between the public and private obscures the extent to which the public is present in the private and in the very notion of the individual. The

private is a public matter. Historically, certain types of families have been elevated to the norm. The nuclear family in which mother, father, and children live together, was the basis for the "index family", standard family in various government financial reports. However, over time, the traditional nuclear family has been reduced numerically, also among families with small children. Nevertheless, the traditional nuclear family is still considered a natural category in many contexts. The significant growth of divorces has been interpreted as a sign of a family institution in crisis (Ellingsæter and Leira, 2004).

Working mothers

Parenthood involves prolonged committed relationships. Selection made in the family does not happen regardless of the financial and material resources. Decisions concerning childcare and division of paid work cannot be understood in isolation from the power relationships within the family (Bourdieu 1996 in Ellingsæter and Leira 2004). The breadwinner of the family is not equal in the majority of families. In Norway, there is a significant number of women who do not have sufficient wages to support themselves and their children. Should one then prioritize employment or childcare, and who are the first to choose, the man or the woman?

Government policies affect what people consider as their needs. In Norway, "more time to children" was a dominant discourse in the 1990s. Some mothers wanted a reform, giving more time to children; they wanted extended maternity leave and 6-hour days. The government provided a reform with cash benefits, to compensate the expenses of the child, making it possible for parents to stay at home with children between one and three years. Freedom of choice in relation to childcare was a convenient justification for the cash benefit. However, in family policy, freedom of choice usually means that women choose between time for work and time for children, and what it takes for men to choose more time for children, is rarely thematized. Freedom of choice is often a welfare measure in itself, but it will often be tensions between choices and various forms of structural and cultural "coercion." Mothers in jobs with a high degree of flexibility often experience the intense pressure of dividing time between work and family. Clearer limits on the unpaid overtime work, and not more flexibility and choice, is what they want (Ellingsæter and Leira 2004).

According to Ellingsæter and Leira (2004), the welfare state has changed in the way of organization of care work, and changed the institutional labor work, but not the gender

equality. In the Nordic countries, gender equality policies have emphasized that both women and men should have the opportunity to combine work and children. Both mothers and fathers are considered capable when it comes to support and care for small children. Despite this, studies show significant differences between women and men in terms of time spent on income-generating activities and care, and significant differences in salaries and unpaid care work. Further, to take long periods of absence from work will not promote women's opportunities in the labor market. It is not desirable to make all the necessary care work into a public responsibility or leave it to the market. Distribution of tasks and responsibilities between family, welfare and labor market has not been established and can be changed. It cannot be taken for granted that those who have always taken most of the caregiving still are determined to do it. Caregiving must be more evenly distributed, and there needs to be more equality between genders (Ellingsæter and Leira 2004).

According to An-Magritt Jensen (2004, in Ellingsæter and Leira 2004), the life of men and women has become more and more similar over the last 30 years. Mothers go into professional roles, and fathers take care of the child. Women's responsibility for children is unchanged, while fathers every day are adapting to children in a small extent. Jensen argues that men still have a dominant position in the labor market; women's have the major role when it comes to parenting and domestic work. In the welfare state of Norway, focus on the new gender roles is an aim, while other countries such as Italy, presuppose more traditional gender stereotypes. The differences in adolescents in these two countries are important for parenthood policy. In Norway, the welfare state is a link between the labor market and parenthood, in Italy, labor and parenthood are in more confrontation (Jensen 2004 in Ellingsæter and Leira 2004)

The research foundation FAFO conducted in the period 1998-2001, 1650 interviews with immigrants in Norway. In these interviews, they charted the views on women's labor participation in different phases of life. The attitudes towards of the role of women, both in the family and the job market, varies considerably by country of origin. Pakistanis and Somalis are more traditional in their views on the role of women than Norwegians, Vietnamese, Chileans, and Germans (Kavli 2004 in Ellingsæter and Leira 2004).

On the question of whether women should be at home full time in different family phases, the main tendency in the answers was the same for all groups of countries before having

children. Before a couple have children, and after the youngest child had started school, almost everyone answered that woman could have paid work. The objections to women working are highest in the period where the family has children from 0 and up to 2 years. This is where the differences between the countries are greatest, according to Kavli (2004 in Ellingsærer and Leira 2004). Among the ethnic Norwegian respondents, 27 percent answered that the mother should be at home full-time, compared to 77 percent of the Pakistani respondents.

The differences between the groups can be described further by looking at those who believe that women can be employed, in relation to whether and when they think women should work full time or part time. The research shows that attitudes vary relatively little between national groups until the youngest child is between 3-6 years. The majority in all groups believe married women without children can work full-time, but that part-time work is the best as long as the children are three years old or younger. Women's labor force participation is lower when the children are small. However, there are differences when it comes to the attitudes on this in the group. Individuals and families adaptations can be influenced by economic factors, such as the cost of daycare and the income of the household. Women with higher education tend to view participation in the labor market as a benefit, but have completely different possibilities than immigrant women with low education (Kavli 2004 in Ellingsærer and Leira 2004).

This research is relevant because it shows major differences between countries and different cultures. It also indicates that the way women view working differs in terms of how much resources they have. If you have a high level of education and come from a higher social class, and like your job, it is more likely to have a desire to continue working.

3.4 Summary

Women's roles and family patterns are changing, in Argentina, as well as in the European countries. Even though women are increasingly active in the labor market, the main responsibility of care is still on them. They adapt in different ways. Although societies such as Sweden and Norway are concerned with facilitating work and family life, some women choose to stay at home or work part-time. This may indicate that some make choices based on personal value-orientation. Furthermore, not everyone sees being employed as an aim at

all stages of life if they can afford it. Although the main ideology is promoting gender equality, the ability to choose is crucial.

4 Theoretical Framework

4.1 Capability approach

4.1.1 Amartya Sen and the development of the capability approach

To illuminate our research questions, we chose to use the Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen's capability approach. The capability approach was first articulated by Sen in the 1980s, and it remains most closely associated with him. For Sen, it is a point that income is only a mean to live the life one wants for oneself. He focuses on people's quality of life and degrees of freedom, not poverty or income distribution. A primary focus in the approach is whether people have the ability to live the life they want, and having a satisfying work-life balance is part of that (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017). We are going to investigate if the women we interviewed felt that they had the capability to choose, or if some factors made them choose in a certain way, such as gender inequality or economic constraints.

As mentioned, Latin America is known for having traditional gender roles, with male dominance. Women are expected to do most of the domestic work and take care of the children. This leads to the question of whether the women have a choice when they stay home with children or work less hours during the time the children are small.

The capability approach is defined by its focus on the moral significance of individuals' capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value. This distinguishes it from more established approaches to ethical evaluation, such as utilitarianism, which focuses exclusively on subjective well-being or the availability of means to the good life. A person's capability to live a good life is defined in terms of the set of valuable 'beings and doings' like being in good health or having loving relationships with others to which they have real access" (Robeyns 2005).

The capability approach focuses directly on the quality of life that individuals are actually able to achieve. This quality of life is analyzed regarding the core concepts of 'functionings' and 'capability'. The approach provides important conceptual tools for sociology's understanding of such dynamics (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Amartya Sen's capability approach distinguishes between these categories:

- Capability inputs: commodities, resources in a broad sense (having a car).
- The capability set: The set of valuable functionings that a person has real access to
- Achieved (or effective) functionings: (driving)
- Conversion factors: the structures constraining or facilitating conversion
- Agency/choice: Agency depends on the ability to personally choose the functionings one values – a choice that may not correlate with personal wellbeing.

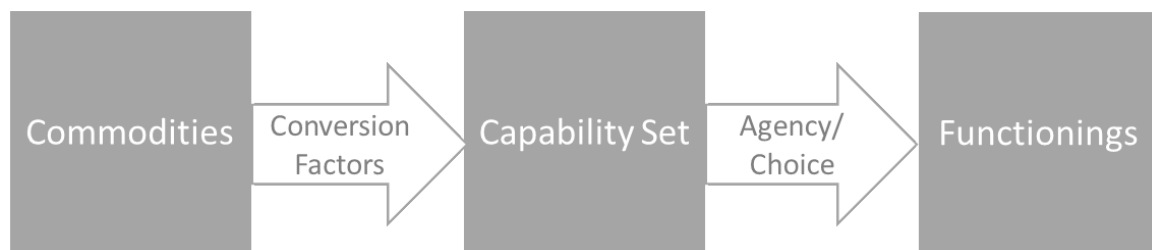


Figure 1: The five conceptual building blocks of the Capability Approach

Figure 1 is a simplified model of the five conceptual building blocks of the capability approach (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017). A capability can be considered a person's opportunity, ability, inner strength or real freedom or potential, to achieve certain conditions or practice certain activities, for example, the chance to realize an outcome or get a result. Capabilities can be interpreted as a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving an outcome. The capability approach focuses on human capabilities, what people are actually able to do and to be in a way informed by an intuitive idea of life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Sen's primary use of the notion of capability is to indicate a space within which comparisons of quality of life are most fruitfully made. Sen asks what people are actually able to do or be instead of asking about people's satisfaction, or how much in the way of resources they can

command. Sen also claims that it is in the space of capabilities that the questions about social equality and inequality are best raised (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

When evaluating well-being, Sen (1993) argues, the most important thing is to consider what people are actually able to be and do. The commodities or wealth people have or their mental reactions (utility), are an inappropriate focus because they provide only limited or indirect information about how well life is going. In Sen's original formulation of the capability approach, the key issue concerned the ability a person has to perform acts or reach states of being, that the person has good reason to value. He adopted capability as a term for "the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or to be, the various 'functionings' he or she can achieve (Sen 1993).

Sen (1992) has emphasized that the person's capability to achieve functionings constitutes the person's effective freedom, the freedom actually enjoyed by the individual. However, he has left it quite open exactly what functionings (combinations of doings and beings) that one would generally expect a person to want to achieve. He has argued that individuals are likely to give different weight to diverse functionings (perhaps beyond some basic capabilities) (Sen 1992).

Sen's capability approach sprang out of a criticism of other scholars' reasoning about and evaluation of the relationship between the access to such means and the likely outcomes in terms of well-being, welfare, and utility. Sen (1993) has developed the idea that various characteristics or circumstances of a person may affect his or her prospects of being able to translate access to means into a capability set, and in the next instance, into achieved functionings. Since the experience of such characteristics or exposure to such circumstances are likely to vary between persons, their ability to convert or transform means into a capability set (and next into achieved functionings) will also differ (Sen 1993).

For these reasons, Sen (1993) has argued that it is insufficient and misleading to evaluate distributions of outcomes (however defined) solely based on knowledge about persons' access to the means to reach such results, and without taking into account human diversity and the heterogeneity of needs. Conversion in this way came to play a crucial role in Sen's overall line of argumentation for the capability approach and for a long time he relied on a rather limited number of suggestive examples of characteristics or circumstances that could

be significant for such processes. This lack of systematic elaboration of such characteristics or circumstances is in line with the general thrust of his version of capability approach, a framework for others to use in specific contexts or spaces and fill in with detailed contents and assumptions about the precise mechanisms behind the issues under study (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

The capability approach focuses directly on the quality of life that individuals are able to achieve. This quality of life is analyzed in terms of the core concepts of ‘functionings’ and ‘capability’. Functionings are states of ‘being and doing’ such as being well-nourished, having shelter. They should be distinguished from the commodities employed to achieve them. Capability refers to the set of valuable functioning that a person has effective access to. Thus, a person’s capability represents the effective freedom of an individual to choose between different functioning combinations – between different kinds of life – that she has reason to value (Robeyns 2005).

The two concepts in the capability approach are important to distinguish between the tools and the objectives (to increase the welfare and development). The goals are of central importance as tools only help to achieve the goals. These two concepts can, however, sometimes merge into each other, as the objectives can be a tool to achieve the goals. If the goal is to get a job, it will also be a tool to achieve the goal of becoming part of the social community (Robeyns 2005).

In the article Human Rights and Capabilities, Sen (2005) takes the difference between choosing to do and be forced to do something. It can be a violation of freedom, even if what people are forced to do is exactly what they had planned to do. A more obvious violation would be that someone was forced to do something they would not otherwise choose to do. The concept of opportunity is often referred to in the capability approach, but requires a significant depth, and capability can help to this illumination. The question of capability allows us to distinguish the advisability between whether a person actually has the opportunity to do the things that she would like to do. If the individual has the means, instruments or authorization, to practice what it is she would like to do (a person's real ability to do this may be due to many circumstances) (Sen 2005).

Hvinden and Halvorsen (2017) shows how Sen has developed the idea that various characteristics or circumstances of a persons life, may affect his or her prospects of being able to translate access to means into a capability set and later into achieved functionings. Because exposure to such circumstances and the experience of such characteristics might vary between persons, their ability to convert or transform means into a capability set will also differ. This is why Sen has argued that it is insufficient and misleading to evaluate distributions of outcomes only based on knowledge about persons' access to the means to reach such outcomes, and without taking into account human diversity and the different needs people have (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Conversion came to play a crucial role in Sen's line of argumentation for the capability approach. Sen relied on a rather limited number of suggestive examples of circumstances or characteristics, that could be significant for such process for a long time. This lack of systematic elaboration is in line with the general trust of his version of the capability approach: a framework for others to use in specific contexts or spaces and fill in with detailed contents and assumptions about the precise mechanisms behind the issues under study (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

All though, Sen (1999) has referred to a diversity of characteristics or circumstances of individuals, as well as to a range of social factors and differences in social and natural environments, which are likely to influence conversion processes. In some of Sens more recent publications, he has identified five main sources of variation in the conversion of capability-inputs into capability sets and functionings (Sen, 1999):

- Personal heterogeneities (diversity in individual characteristics, physical and mental capacities, knowledge and skills)
- Distributions within the family (intra-family distribution of paid and unpaid work, earnings, and purchase power: gendered divisions of labor)
- Differences in relational positioning (e.g., cultures, social norms and conventions negatively affecting the respect of others as well the person's dignity, self-respect and 'the ability to appear in public without shame)
- Varieties in social climate (e.g., the quality of public services and community relations)
- Environmental diversities (e.g., climate, differential exposure and risk of illnesses)

Ingrid Robeyns (2010) has redeveloped Sen's approach, and she distinguishes between three types of conversion factors in her influential codification of Sen's capability approach. These three factors are influencing the extent to which a person can transform resources into functionings (Robeyns 2010):

- Personal conversion factors (e.g., metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills or intelligence)
- Social conversion factors (e.g., public policies, social norms, gendered divisions of labor, social practices that unfairly discriminate, societal hierarchies or power relations)
- Environmental conversion factors (e.g., the physical or built environment in which a person lives, climate, pollution, geographical location, and topography)

The examples that Sen and Robeyns give of conversion factors are likely to interact with each other. It is also reasonable to expect interdependencies between the types. A person with great reading skill will be dependent on a system of universal education as well as high quality of the education that is provided. The indicative examples and types of conversion factors are invitations to sociological theorization about such interrelationships, rather than a strict sorting of factors of relevance for conversion (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Some of these factors might serve as facilitators and enablers. It is a possibility that most people experience a combination of factors constraining and enhancing such process: there may be discriminatory practices, but also positive actions on the part of governments or employers (e.g., special efforts to provide work for persons belonging to underrepresented groups) (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

According to Hvinden and Halvorsen (2017), Sen criticizes earlier theories and methods. He believes utilitarians put too much emphasis on the individual's perception of happiness. For many, it is to earn a lot and owning a lot of things, that give the individual welfare and freedom of action, which is supposed to be the way to happiness. Sen would rather look at structures in society, in politics, culture, and family, and then examine the possibilities for people to achieve their goals (actually achieve). The fundamental concepts are functionality and capacity. If the society gives people these opportunities, they have real freedom "effective freedom." In addition, people must have reasonable grounds for their values, "reason for value" (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Many researchers have used Sen's approach and later developed it. We are in the following looking further at this, to examine if these developments can make the use of the capability approach even more helpful regarding our research on work-life balance and gender equality.

4.1.2 Martha Nussbaum and the capability approach

Sen has not given any clear descriptions about what functions a person would want and expect to achieve. His argument is that it is likely that different individuals have a different weight to different functionings, maybe beyond some basic capability. Martha Nussbaum (2006), on the other hand, found this position unsatisfactory. She is perhaps most famous for her development of an elaborate list of basic human capabilities, grouped under ten headings: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, and at last control over one's environment. At the same time, she stressed that this list is open-ended and that it is likely to be modified (Nussbaum 2006). One could argue that Nussbaum's approach is much more specific and related to fundamental human rights.

Nussbaum (2000) argues that women in much of the world lack support for fundamental functions of human life. Considering her view, they are less well nourished, less healthy and much less likely to be literate and have a professional or technical education than men. When entering the workplace, they are likely to face obstacles including intimidation from family, sexual harassment and sex discrimination in hiring. These factors take their toll on their emotional well-being in the sense that women have fewer opportunities than men to live free from fear and enjoy rewarding types of life, especially when they are married without choice. Unequal social and political circumstances give women different human capabilities. No country treats its women as well as its men, according to the Human Development Report 1997 of the United Nations Development Program. This is a composite measure that includes life expectancy, wealth, and education (Nussbaum 2000).

By looking at Nussbaum's interpretation of the capability approach, we might get a broader insight when using the approach. Perhaps Nussbaum views the approach from angles that Sen is missing, in ways that can be useful when doing our analysis.

Capabilities in question should be pursued for each and every person, treating each as an end and none as a mere tool of the ends of others, according to Nussbaum (2000). For this reason, Nussbaum (2000) adopts a principle of each person's capability, based on a principle of each individual as an end. She claims that women have all too often been treated as the supporters of the ends of others, rather than as ends in their own right. That is why this principle has special critical force concerning women's lives (Nussbaum 2000).

Nussbaum's approach uses the idea of a threshold level of each capability, beneath which it is held that truly human functioning is not available to citizens, and the social goal should be understood concerning getting citizens above the capability threshold (Nussbaum 2000).

Nussbaum (2000) moves beyond the merely comparative use of capabilities to the construction of a normative political proposal that is a partial theory of justice. She believes that philosophical theorizing has practical political value and that its place cannot be filled by other more empirical types of inquiry. Part of theory's practical value lies in its abstract and systematic character (Nussbaum 2000).

Sen's approach based on functionings and capability was pioneered in development economics. Nussbaum (2000) introduces the capability approach from a different perspective. Her version of the approach derives from a period of collaboration with Sen at the World Institute for Development Economics Research beginning in 1986. The ideas she had been pursuing had a resemblance to ideas that Sen had for some years been pursuing in economics (Nussbaum 2000).

Sen's primary use of the notion of capability is to indicate a space within which comparisons of quality of life are most fruitfully made. Nussbaum (2000) asks what people are actually able to do or be, or how much in the way of resources they can command. Sen insisted that it is in the space of capability, that questions about social equality and inequality are best raised (Nussbaum 2000).

Even though Nussbaum (2000) agrees with this, she seeks to go beyond the merely comparative use of the capability space to articulate an account of how capabilities, together with the idea of a threshold level of capabilities, can provide a basis for central constitutional principles that citizens have a right to demand from their governments. Nussbaum (2000)

claims that the notion of a threshold is more important than the concept of full capability equality. According to her, Sen nowhere uses the idea of a threshold. It is reasonable to raise questions about what needs to be done when all citizens are above the threshold, given that this already imposes a taxing and nowhere-realized standard. Even though Nussbaum's proposal intends to be compatible with many different accounts of distribution above the threshold, it is consequently a partial theory of just distribution, rather than a complete distribution (Nussbaum 2000).

Nussbaum and Sen are in agreement in stressing that the capabilities one should strive for, should be understood to be valuable for each and every person. It is the capability of each individual that one should consider when asking how nations are doing. Nussbaum (2000) argues that Sen's criticism of organic model of the family, makes it clear that he supports this emphasis on treating each person as an end, similar to Nussbaum's principle of each individual's capability. However, Nussbaum's approach departs from Sen's in the way that Sen has never produced explicit arguments against relativism, apart from historical arguments about non-Western cultures that show the descriptive inadequacy of many anti-universalist approaches. Nussbaum (2000) stresses that that cultures are scenes of debate and contestation.

Nussbaum (2000) points out that Sen has never made a list of the central capabilities that are essential. However, he gives examples, and the Human Development Reports organize things in ways that correspond to some of the items on Nussbaum's list. The idea of making the list and describing its use in generating political principles is not Sen's approach (Nussbaum 2000).

The definition Nussbaum's makes of the three types of capabilities (basic, internal, combined) also differ from Sen's approach. The idea that capability, not functioning, is the appropriate political goal is an idea Sen sometimes supports through examples, but he has never endorsed it as a general theoretical point, according to Nussbaum (2000). The distinction between well-being and agency, which, together with the distinction between freedom and achievement, structures much of Sen's recent writings about capabilities. This is absent in Nussbaum's version. She believes that all the important distinctions can be captured as aspects of the capability /function distinction. Nussbaum (2000) uses health as an example: we should distinguish between the opportunity or the capability to be healthy, and actual healthy

functioning. A society might make the first one available and also give individuals the freedom not to choose the relevant functioning. Nussbaum (2000) is unsure that using a well-being/agency distinction makes any more clarity here. Healthy functioning is itself a way of being active, not just a passive state of satisfaction.

The Utilitarian associations of the idea of «well-being» may cause some to suppose that Sen is imagining a way of enjoying well-being that does not involve active doing and being, according to Nussbaum (2000). This is the reason she dissociate her terminology more strongly from that of the Utilitarian tradition.

Women are bearers of human capabilities, essential powers of choice that make a moral claim for opportunities to be realized and to flourish. Women's unequal failure to attain a higher level of capability, at which the choice of central human functions is really open to them, is, therefore, a problem of justice in the view of Nussbaum (2000).

Nussbaum (2000) argues, like Sen, that a political approach, based on ideas of human capability and functioning, supplies a sound basis for thinking about these problems. This can help to construct basic political principles that can serve as the foundation for constitutional guarantees, to which nations should be held by their citizens. She also argues that the capabilities framework provides a good orientation for comparative quality of life measurement when nations are compared (Nussbaum 2000).

People concerned with political change often have doubts about philosophy, wondering how such an abstract and remote discipline can be helpful. Nussbaum (2000) claims that abstract normative theory is playing a role in practice already, in the form of the normative theories characteristic of utilitarian economics. According to her, people do not go through life without forming views about the human good and the right, about what has value and what does not, about what choice is, about what justice and mercy and aggression and grief are. For this reason, she points out why an abstract normative theory can be helpful (Nussbaum 2000).

Nussbaum (2000) claims that feminists rightly demand that theories dealing with women's lives show their understanding of women's experience of subordination and exclusion. Much of what philosophers of the past have written about women, sex, and the family has not

shown such understanding. The capabilities approach is plural because what women strive for constraints a plurality of irreducibly distinct components. Nussbaum (2000) claims that the capabilities approach is the systematization and theorization of such thoughts and plans. It is focused on capability or empowerment, even as the women's thinking is focused on creating opportunities and choices, rather than imposing on any individual a required mode of functioning (Nussbaum 2000).

As we can see, Nussbaum and Sen's view on the capability approach have many similarities. However, the narrative method Nussbaum adapts, with its implicit emphasis on the political importance of the emotions and the imagination, is different from what Sen has written.

4.1.3 Research on breadwinner models and the provision of informal care: using the capability approach

Giullari and Lewise (2015) find that most Western welfare states are moving away from the assumptions that men and women make families based on the notion of the 'male breadwinner model family', and towards a new set of assumptions, based on an 'adult worker model family'. In the traditional breadwinner model, the assumption is that men should take responsibility for earning, and women for caring. In the new model the question becomes how care work is to be accommodated as all adults, both men and women, are assumed to have full time work, whether they are parents or not. In Europe, policy makers are to increasing extent assuming that the work of care is to move into the formal and paid sector. This comes in addition to a more general shift from 'passive' to 'active' welfare that aims to promote women's participation in the labor market. However, in most countries, women are still far from having achieved economic autonomy (Giullari and Lewis 2005).

Giullari and Lewis (2015) argue that there are some real limits to the pursuit of a full adult worker model based on the commodification of care. There is furthermore not much sign of any reduction in the amount of informal care that is needed, or in the value that women are expected to provide most of it. This does raise some difficult issues in respect of gender equality, especially as it requires consideration of the terms and conditions: the shift in policy assumption toward the adult worker model is being made, especially about how the care work is shared and valued.

In this research, they also look at the possibility offered by the capability approach to look at these issues. In their view, the capability approach gives a good base to address issues of care, especially because gender equality is of a very central concern to both Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. The approach provides a universal equality model, which is rooted in the recognition of human diversity, and is thereby very suitable for addressing problems of gender equality in relation to paid work and care (Giullari and Lewis 2015).

The capability approach insists that one needs to put individuals in the position where they have all possibilities, to be able to make genuine choices. The approach has potential to justify policies that promote the sharing of care between men and women. This means it can be used to justify state support for care work, and to argue that it is not possible to have a real freedom to choose care, unless care is given a monetary value (Giullari and Lewis 2005).

Lewis and Giullari (2005) argue that care must be conceptualized as a 'legitimate' choice (which the capability approach helps us to do), and as a necessary human activity, which in turn provides the basis for arguing that it must be shared between men and women. Nevertheless, 'forcing' men to share care work raises an issue of the moral qualities, that have been identified as characterizing genuine care. They further argue that positive incentives for men to care must be built into the kinds of measures that are required to underpin the 'real' choice to care: time to care, cash for care, the regulation of work hours and care services. They also point out that there are some large difficulties with the task of making this kind of social policies that promote and give real choices for men and women with respect to both paid and unpaid work. However, it is impossible to choose not to care, or not to work, from the point of view of human welfare.

A choice that is genuine is always affected by the issue of unequal power relations, that distort the interdependence of women's and men's sets of capability. The lack of attention to this power relation has been a common criticism of the capability approach, first raised issue of Feminist Economics, that was devoted to the work of Sen (Sen et al. 2003 and Hill 2003 in Giullari and Lewis 2005). However, sharing care work between men and women can also increase the possibility of women to choose to engage in some type of political participation.

Furthermore, Giullari and Lewis (2005) argue that care must be conceptualized both as a necessary central human activity, and as a 'legitimate' opportunity or choice, which is what

the capability approach is giving us. This further gives us a base for arguing that care work must be shared between women and men, and it is necessary if women's agency freedom is to be equal to men's.

It is also important to remember that conceptualizing the gender redistribution of paid work and care work, with regards to redistribution of opportunities and skills, might not be enough, as the independence of men's and women's agency freedom is skewed by unequal power relation. Phillips (2001 in Guillari and Lewis 2015) argue that it is not possible to ignore these types of group inequalities. That women in general do more care work than men is an example of inequalities in 'group functions', and signify gender inequalities in capabilities, unless the view that the distribution of preferences between men and women are rooted in the sexual differences, and gender justice does require us to take note of them. This is exactly why it is still so important that care is conceptualized as a necessary human activity that requires sharing, as this also is a strategy for confronting unequal power relations between men and women. However, Guillari and Lewis (2005) further argue, in contrast to Philips (2001), that the idea of equality of capabilities still is important, and that the structural conversion factors, central to capability approach's notion of positive freedom, can be taken further to address the inequalities in gender roles, in control over resources. By this they mean that 'a less powerful individual needs more resources to be able to choose the functioning's that she values out of her capability set' (Guillari and Lewis 2015).

Thereby, the capabilities approach can justify a kind of measure that requires a real choice to care in respect to cash for care, time to care, care services, and the regulation of working hours. On the basis that they are needed to permit the individual to make real choices, such measures can be justified. Usually, in practice, they have been used to enable individuals (especially women) to choose to add work to care and they primarily rely on the sharing care between, on the one side household, and on the other hand some type of paid provision. Furthermore, to achieve this, care must also be shared between men and women at the household level, and one must also recognize the importance of independence and the unequal power, as well as the individual's freedom (Guillari and Lewis 2015).

4.1.4 Gender research using the capability approach

Barbara Hobson (2013) argues that the capability approach has provided fertile ground for gender research. We chose to look at her interpretation to elucidate why Sen's capability approach can be applied in research dealing with gender equality and women's rights.

Hobson (2013) believes there is a prominence of and sensitivity to gender issues in both Sen's and Nussbaum's writings. Sen's recognition that inequalities exist outside the market, opened conceptual space for applications of the capabilities approach to dimensions of gender inequalities in the family and the division of paid and unpaid labor (Agarwal, 1997; Iversen, 2003 in Hobson 2013). However, the capability approach has not made the same inroads into sociological research terrains with a focus on gender. There is an emergent research in gender, welfare states and policy contexts, and recently on gender and capabilities within the firm and work organizational culture according to Hobson (2013). However, Sen's capability approach remains fairly uncharted territory in sociology and on the margins within gender research (Hobson 2013).

Hobson (2013) engages with the potential that Sen's capability approach offers for sociological research, alongside the conceptual challenges it presents for empirically grounded research. In her analysis, she suggest how Sen's framework can lead toward more dynamic sociological models and multi-layered policy frameworks. This involves elaboration of concepts, revealing the interactions between different levels of analysis individual, institutional and societal and locating the mechanisms that explain the conversion of capabilities into agency freedoms (Hobson 2013).

Women's choice regarding paid and unpaid work

Catherine Hakim's (2006 in Hobson 2013) account of women's employment orientations (preferences) assumes that women's choices are based on underlying cultural values and lifestyles. In her view, women can be divided into three broad categories: work-oriented, home-oriented and adaptive. «Adaptive preferences» is a term that often shows that people adjust their goals to what they perceive as realistic or possible to achieve. The latter being the largest group, between 40–80 percent who seek a compromise between two conflicting sets of values (Hakim 2006 in Hobson 2013).

From a capability perspective, all three of Hakim's groups could be seen as holding so-called adaptive preferences, reflecting what they perceive as their "menu of options" (Burchardt, 2009: 16 in Hobson 2013), shaped by experiences over the lifetime. The perception of choices may not coincide with one's "menu of options." In her study of voluntary and involuntary employment, Burchardt (2002) found that both women with few resources and human capital, as well as those with high education and household income, choose not to be in employment, even though those with high education may have had the most capabilities for exercising choice. She claims that cultural conditioning may be underlying these choices (Burchardt 2002 in Hobson 2013).

In Sen's capability approach, the choice between starving and fasting, contains two unambiguous situations, in which agency is explicit in the latter and agency inequalities in the former. Hobson (2013) gives an example to this: the choices between the father who is a workaholic, and the father who takes on two jobs to make ends meet. However, in many workplaces and sectors, to be a workaholic is the norm, and those who do not keep up with high work demands are cast out. Norms around men's breadwinning operate for both of these fathers, in the view of Hobson (2013).

What mothers and fathers would actually choose if they had opportunities for alternatives, is unresolvable in the capability approach and reflecting the more general counterfactual problem. One could ask them if they would have chosen differently or if there is something they have regrets on, or about goals in life that have changed over time. Methodological solutions, such as the use of surveys at different points in time, do not overcome this dilemma since these do not address contingent and dynamic aspects of individual lives, such as divorce or the death of a partner and financial crisis (Burchardt 2009 in Hobson 2013).

Hobson (2013) argues that hangs in practices may not reflect the recalibration of our goals. Empirical strategies that ask about our choices in retrospect, do not come to grips with adaptive strategies, that what we chose was the best option. Despite the effects of women's economic dependency in marriage on their economic wellbeing after the dissolution of partnership (Hobson 2013), when choosing to leave employment to be full-time care providers, women may not factor in the possible long-term consequences for their own lives or reflect upon the norms driving them. The consequences of choices on wellbeing over the life course lie outside the framework of freedoms to choose, Hobson (2013) claims.

Changing the norms

In the view of Hobson (2013), Sen's capability approach offers pathways out of the black box of choice, which reveals his sociological lens: his emphasis on the embeddedness of agency within institutional settings, and his recognition of both the potential for agency freedoms, and the constraints standing in the way (agency inequalities), where norms play a crucial role in circumscribing agency freedoms (Hobson 2013).

Sen's insights in two seminal articles on cooperative conflicts in gender relations in the family, she puts light on the ways in which prevailing norms may naturalize gendered choices, limiting the horizons for choice. These are captured in his two concepts: "self-interest response" and "perceived contribution response" (Sen, 1989 in Hobson 2013). Sen (1989, in Hobson 2013) argues that self-perceptions of interest can be harmful to wellbeing. He gives an example of families in India, in which women may starve themselves to feed their families. For Sen, how a person perceives her self-interest offers a critique of classic bargaining models (Nash 1950 in Hobson 2013), given the undervaluation of women's contribution to the family in care. This is reflected in their perception of what they are entitled to claim for themselves and how this affects their bargaining position in cooperative conflicts. Sen recognizes that self-perceptions and perceived contributions are important for understanding agency inequalities and the role of cultural norms in shaping them (Benería, 2008 in Hobson 2013).

Not recognized in Sen's account of cooperative conflict, is the extent to which gender norms operate in perceptions of entitlements, according to Hobson (2013). Even when women are contributing more resources to the family economy, they may contribute to more household work and be doing more unpaid work (Hobson 2013).

Hobson (2013) believes that Sen does not specifically address the processes that might lead to changes in norms and practices. However, his concept of conversion factors has opened up conceptual space for others to reveal how this might work. The law in itself may not alter women's opportunities, however over time it can lead to development of different norms, that can have a destabilizing effect on conventional assumptions about the division of paid and unpaid work and overturn employers' discrimination against women in the workforce. Laws have the potential to change norms and practices: however, rather than a specific conversion factor. According to Hobson (2013), we need to think in terms of conversion processes:

where and how policies are seeded, in which institutional contexts and how entitlements are converted into a sense of entitlement (Hobson 2013).

Hobson (2013) provides one example of this mechanism: The Swedish parental leave policy for fathers, offering a case study of how this seeding process operates, how a law becomes legitimized in a society and institutionally embedded, shaping fathers' sense of entitlement to make claims in the workplace and household. Since the 1970s, the shared participation of men and women in spheres of family and employment has been part of the ideological core of the Swedish model of gender equality. Before the leave policy for fathers, only 30 percent took any leave at all, and men's overall share hovered around five or six percent (Hobson et al., 2014 in Hobson 2013). The most recent figures show that 9 out of 10 fathers are now taking parental leave and their share has risen to over 25 percent (Duvander and Johansson 2012 in Hobson 2013).

This policy provided fathers with strong incentives to take advantage of their rights and in that way increased their capabilities to make claims for them at the workplace and negotiate with partners. The public discourse, government campaigns and support of unions gave it more legitimacy (Bergman and Hobson 2002 in Hobson 2013). Whether new norms are seeded involves more than which laws and policies are implemented, but also how they become part of the normative and ideological landscape in societies (Hobson 2013).

Hobson (2013) addresses some of the ways in which Sen's capability approach can enhance both sociological research more generally, and more explicitly, gender dimensions. For sociologists, Sen's dynamic concept of agency could lead toward more process-oriented frameworks beyond what we do (practices or outcomes). In our research on work-life balance in Argentina we used this process-oriented perspective to examine the women's scope for agency: i.e. not only their practices at the time of the interview, but also how and whether their choices and preferences had changed over time (Hobson 2013).

While women have increased their labor force activity dramatically over the last decades, men's involvement contributions to care, and in particular domestic work, has not been changed accordingly (Goldscheider et al., 2015 in Hobson 2013). The capability approach allows us to tap into alternative scripts and potential scenarios for change, reflecting tectonic plates under the surface reverberating changing aspirations. Finally, while acknowledging the

challenges in adapting Sen's capability framework to sociological models, Hobson (2013) does not view these to be insurmountable. Rather, she has sought to underscore the potential of Sen's approach for developing dynamic models for empirical analysis.

Hobson (2013) finally points out that in order for changes to happen in society, it is necessary to change the norms. Gender equality should be facilitated, so that men and woman do equally much when it comes to unpaid work at home. This is not only up to the state, but it must be a change of attitude among people (Hobson 2013).

4.1.5 Work-life balance and capability approach

Hobson (2013) is using Sen's capability approach related to a work-life balance perspective. At first glance, his definition of capabilities as the ability to achieve a range of functions might seem technical and abstract. However, it is also a notion quite simple, to be able to function in your activities or in your achievements which further greatening your opportunities of what you can do and be. Sen (1992 in Hobson 2013) has ranged functions as for instance the basics of having a shelter, access to healthcare and being able to take education and more complex things such as having self-respect. All of these are in this sense seen as achievements that further increase wellbeing and quality of life for a person. Hobson with others (2013) has added the concept of work-life balance to the list of functions that potentially provides wellbeing. This is an idea of increasing importance in societies of capitalism where we two-earner families are becoming more normal. The job demands and work intensity have been increasing and the time outside of work in these societies is viewed as precious.

Sen has constructed three categories that have later been called conversion factors. Hobson and others (2013) have kept these categories and further modified them to fit their evaluative space, capabilities for work-life balance. They have done this in advanced capitalist societies across welfare regimes, and their model of conversion factors forming capabilities includes the individual factors, the institutional factors, and the social /cultural factors. They consider like Sen do that a person is not an isolated atom in the capability approach. Instead, a person's opportunities and their options are very much depended upon relations with others and what the state and other institutions are doing to hamper them (Dreze and Sen 2002: Robeyns 2003 in Hobson 2013).

Work-life balance - Sens capabilities approach within the European context

Hobson (2011) provides a conceptual map of the what, why and how of capabilities for studies on work-life balance, and why a capabilities framework offers new insight into the agency gap in work-life balance in a European context.

Rather than a specified theory, Sen's capabilities approach is a framework of thought (Robeyns 2005: Sen 1992 in Hobson 2011). Deciding which capabilities matter is dependent on what aspects of well-being are being evaluated and for whom. Assessing well-being and work-life balance can embrace many aspects of our lives that affect the quality of life, not just to have employment, but to work in an environment that allows one to combine having and caring for a family, according to Hobson (2011).

Hobson (2011) argues that Sen's capabilities is an evaluative space to assess well-being and quality of life and the freedom to pursue it. Deciding which capabilities matter is dependent on what aspects of well-being are being evaluated and for whom. Hobson's work-life balance is the evaluative space for assessing how policies and their implementation enhance or weaken capabilities for actualizing quality of life in European societies (Hobson 2011).

Hobson's focus is whether laws, policies, and discourses on work-life balance in European societies enable working parents to achieve a better quality of life. In this article Hobson (2011) asks whether individuals can convert these entitlements into capabilities for work-life balance. Alternatively, what are the barriers (personal, institutional, and societal) that limit their possibilities for claiming them, those that produce weak capabilities and agency inequalities, using the concepts within the capabilities paradigm (Hobson 2011).

Sen defines capabilities as being able to achieve a range of functionings (Sen 1993 in Hobson 2011). A person must be able to function in activities that expand the opportunities for what you can do and who you can be (beings and doings in Sen's terms). Functionings can be very basic, such as having healthcare, as well as more complex aspects of well-being, such as having self-respect (Sen 1992 in Hobson 2011). Hobson (2011) has added work-life balance to the list of potential functionings to evaluate the quality of life.

Achieving a work-life balance allows one to engage in activities that are intrinsically valuable for most of us having more time with family and friends, and to have a less stressful and more healthy life. The difference between these two concepts (functionings and capabilities) is the difference between what we do (achievements/functionings) and what are the possibilities for actualizing them (capabilities). Hobson (2011) points out that in their case this is the agency freedom to achieve a satisfying work-life balance.

Capabilities and functionings are often hard to distinguish from one another (Sen 1992 in Hobson 2011), since what people manage to do is linked to their possibilities for achieving them. For example, a poor work-life balance can affect our health. Giving her focus on gender capabilities and agency inequalities, it is important to make a distinction between means and ends in capabilities (Robeyns 2005 in Hobson 2011) to evaluate what the long-term consequences are for well-being and agency freedom.

Hobson (2011) gives an example relevant to policies addressed in this issue. A mother might exercise the right to reduce hours during the years of early childrearing, however, without the rights to return to her former position this might result in the loss of employment or her being forced to take a job in which her skills and education are not utilized (Fagan 2004 in Hobson 2011).

Fagan and Walthery (2004 in Hobson 2011) consider the policies to reduce hours in firms ranging from no possibilities to full reversibility, which permits workers to move between full- to part-time work and from reduced hours back to full time. The last formula provides the most capabilities for agency freedom in work-life balance, in the view of Fagan and Walthery (2004 in Hobson 2011).

An evaluative space involves more than looking at differences in incomes, social goods, and utilities. It also entails the possibilities of a person to achieve a goal that she/he regards as important (Sen 1992 in Hobson 2011). The concepts of choice and agency are highly contested in work-life balance research, which are important concepts in Sen's capabilities approach. Hobson (2011) believes that agency is at the core of Sen's framework, but agency freedom exists within a universe of constraints. Capabilities for achieving work-life balance, and quality of life, involves social institutions and normative structures including policies that

enable agency as well as gender and social hierarchies that constrain our choice and our claim (Hobson 2011).

For this reason, our choices (freedoms) are restricted choices (Robeyns 2005 in Hobson 2011). The capabilities framework poses a challenge to theories of preference and choice that do not recognize that one's choices/ freedoms are bounded by what we perceive as possible. What we see as possible, not regarding utility but of capabilities, not in terms of preferences but of genuine choice, Hobson claims (2011).

The possibilities for different scenarios and alternatives are built into a capabilities approach. This is relevant to work-life balance and the gendered division of care within household where the research suggests a lack of significant change. Even though there are now new rights for parental leave for fathers, the statistics on men who uses their rights does not show dramatic change in European societies. The fact that most men do not use their parental leave rights does not capture the shifting norms and desires of a new generation of mothers and fathers (Doucet 2009: Hobson and Fahlen 2009a in Hobson 2011).

Sen's agency and capabilities framework gives room to look beyond who does what and for how long and to ask what individuals can aspire to, or even imagine. Hobson (2011) claims that this perspective is central for interpreting fathering practices. By focusing on agency inequalities, we highlight the need for more dynamic models in comparative welfare state research that reflect process-oriented analyses, rather than the more conventional analysis of outcomes in welfare regimes, such as income inequalities (Hobson 2011).

The capabilities approach provides a means of valuing care. Social care provision plays a part in enabling real or effective choice in who cares and how care is organized (Lewis and Giulliani 2006 in Hobson 2011). Work-life balance also raises questions about capabilities and choice in care according to Hobson (2011). Strong male-breadwinner societies, with much tax incentives for mothers to be full-time housewives, have inhibited the development of institutional solutions that would allow them to have a genuine choice not to be the primary caregivers (Gauthier 2004: Land and Rose 1985 in Hobson 2011). Hobson (2011) gives an example of the alternative: in the former Soviet Regime countries, full-time employment of mothers and fathers with little flexibility in working times produced endemic time poverty among mothers (Heinen 1990 in Hobson 2011).

Work-life balance policies and discourse implicitly recognize the linkages between market and non-market dimensions of gendered agency inequalities according to Hobson (2011). Policies that recognize these linkages have the potential for creating gender equality in the labor market. Hobson (2011) gives the example of that father quotas can enable fathers to make claims on their employers for reconciling employment with family. As the proportion of father's parental leave increases, the gendered discrimination in the labor market that takes for granted that women are responsible for caring and men are the breadwinners, may be weakened. Work-life balance policies that enable mothers to keep their position in the labor market and encourage fathers to take a more active role in care increase the agency of mothers and fathers to make claims within the family for a more equitable division of paid and unpaid work (Hobson 2011).

Hobson (2011) argues that most literature employing Sen's capabilities framework has tended to be in the abstract philosophical level, micro applications within a rational choice model or policy design. Hobson (2011) argues that the challenge in applying the capabilities approach is to operationalize concepts such as potential freedom and agency inequalities, in different institutional/ normative contexts. When using sociological approaches that confront the agency gaps in exercising existing rights, one can reveal how particular institutional settings can give more opportunities for converting rights into capabilities for work-life balance, while others reinforce existing agency inequalities (Hobson 2011).

Hobson (2011) argues that when considering work-life balance as a functioning for quality of life, we move gender from a subtext to main text of theorizing and policy analysis in a European context. The capabilities paradigm has provided conceptual tools to respond to the challenge laid down by some feminist researchers for more agency centered and dynamic approaches in studies of family and gender equality and reconciling work (Hobson 2011).

4.2 Structuration theory

In addition to the capability approach, we chose to use structuration theory in our analysis. This we believe can provide us with an even more accurate way of analyzing our data. Bjørn Hvinden and Rune Halvorsen (2017) argues that the capability approach can strengthen the capacity of sociology to link agency and structure in dynamic analysis of social inequality

and marginality. We chose to use their article and their approach as a foundation for our use of the structuration theory, also because we saw it linked to the capability approach.

The original structuration approach that is associated with the British sociologist Anthony Giddens' work goes back to the early 1970s. It presents a meta-sociology and a social ontology about how we can understand the social world, rather than a set of specific propositions about how this social world actually works. Giddens views social practices as producing structures, but also as produced by structures, and highlights the role of social practices in the linking of agency and structures (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Giddens holds that the structure humans find themselves within is balancing what is determined for them, but also voluntarism, which involves the idea of individuals being completely free to create their lived environment. By this he means that people are neither fully determined by structures, nor entirely free to choose their lives. Structuration theory can be helpful to explain the relationships that the 'agency' within humans has with institutions or 'structure' (Lamsal 2012). This can provide a possibility to look at how the structure of the society you live in (policies, environment and so on), and your freedom to create your life and your way of using it, go hand in hand.

Giddens rejects the idea that structures have an existence independently of social actors and argues in favor of regarding structures as resources and rules, which actors produce and reproduce through their practices. This conception of structures has meant that many people have seen it as abstract, indeterminate and open-ended and in that way making it difficult to adopt as a framework for empirical research (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Since the early 1980s there has been two different evolving's, with development in sociology on the one hand, and on the contrary the capability approach of Sen and Nussbaum. However, recently there have been some efforts to look beyond this division between the two approaches. Hvinden and Halvorsen (2017) ask how the capability approach can enrich the ways in which sociology deals with the dynamic linkage between agency and structure in sociology. They argue that if we can use the conceptual tools of the capability approach to theorize about virtual of vicious circles, we might be able to improve the understanding of agency/structure dynamics (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Hvinden and Halvorsen (2017) show how Rob Stones (2005) and Karen O'Reilly (2012) have developed a theoretical strategy informed by Giddens structuration theory, with the aim to make this approach more useful as a framework for both designing empirical and analyzing the material. On the other side, by reinterpreting key concepts like structure, they move closer to a Critical Realist position. O'Reillys (2012, in Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017) presentation of the strategy brings out the dynamics linkages between practices and active agency on the one hand and structures on the other. O'Reillys' model about external structures includes both opportunities and limitations for action. The actor experiences the nature or strength of external structures directly or indirectly in her or his micro context, even if the actor does not acknowledge them as conditions for action (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017). This has been divided into internal structures, external structures, practice, and outcomes.

Internal structures

Internal structures involve the actors long-term or lasting dispositions, world views and resources, and also their situated and time-dependent interpretation, learning, ways of thinking and responding. In our research this can be converted into: how do women view their capabilities, values, and beliefs, and how do the social norms affect the ability women have when considering work. Further, how do they consider their possibility to combine their jobs with having family and small children, and do the social norms within them and people around them facilitate or hamper this?

External structures

The external structures are the limitations and the opportunities for action. The environment around actors either strengthens or weakens their possibilities. The external structure will, in this case, be the resources available for the professional women. For example, factors like maternity leave and the availability of kindergarten and what help the state provides (if any). It may also be the women's income and participation in the labor market. If the workplace facilitates the woman when she has a child, if it for instance offers flexible hours while the children are small, this can be an example of external structure.

Practices

Practices imply the daily actions of the agents in local contexts or communities of practice. In this research, we use it regarding what the women do, and what their strategies are for being

able to both have a family and employment outside the home. Having paid help at home, help from family or friends or having an agreement with the workplace to work less during the time the child is small, can all be examples of such strategies.

Outcomes

Within the outcomes lies reproduction and transformation of social life, including the shaping, or reshaping, of external and internal structures and the conditions for action. In this context, examples of outcomes can be what the consequences are when it comes to regulations of gender equality, women’s opportunities for participation in the labor market and their economic independence.

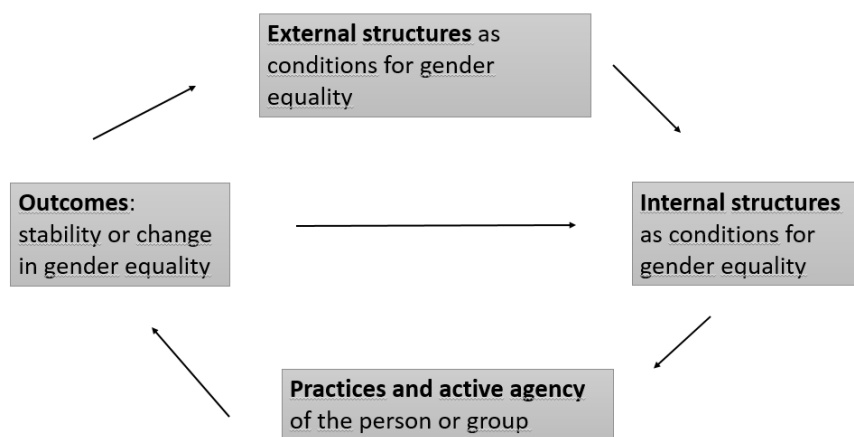


Figure 2: A simplified model of the dynamic relationship between conditions for achieving gender equality (OR: work-life balance), the practices of women and achieved outcomes (adapted after Halvorsen and Hvinden 2013)

The visual presentation of O’Reilly provides only a simple and unfiltered loop of feedback from outcomes to the external structure, which is the next cycle of the structure/agency relationships. However, it shows clearly that in question the external structures are not limited to the agents’ immediate environment, but that it may also refer to structures that are more distant from the agents, or at higher levels. So far, the characteristics of the models of agency-structure dynamics are summarized at a relatively high level of abstractness. Primarily they represent ways of thinking about such dynamics. None of the models give any details about how we can expect the linkages between agency and structure to develop over time, or about the exact mechanisms that the linkages are likely to emerge, reproduce or change (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017).

Hvinden and Halvorsen (2017) further give an outline of a model of agency-structure dynamics, that is inspired by the capability approach where this type of mechanisms is more explicit and less abstract. They aim to show how using this concept of conversion processes, and factors can improve our ability to identify the dynamic relationship between agency and structure. Even if their wish is “*to discuss the potential of the capability approach to enhance our understanding of agency/structure dynamics in general and the conditions for change in disable people’s participation in particular*”, we believe converting it is a good framework, also for our research.

In an earlier paper, at the beginning of the same project, Hvinden and Halvorsen (2013) have made a table (Table 5.1), about Specification of dimensions of Active Citizenship and conditions for persons with disabilities achieving Active Citizenship: Security. We used this model as a framework and made a table of our own.

This table, Table 1, provides us with a structured explanation of structuration theory as we want to use it in this research. The table shows what to look for, both in the inside and the outside perspective, and what type of data to use within each setting. The table will provide us with a guideline for the use of structuration theory in Chapter 9, when we analyze our data and consider gender equality and work-life balance for the highly educated women of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

	A External structures	B Internal Structures	C1 Practices	C2 Practices	D1 Outcomes	D2 Outcomes
Perspective	Outside	Inside	Outside	Inside	Outside	Inside
Gender equality	<p>Prevalence of gender discrimination in the labor market (employment rates, full time/part time, equal pay)</p> <p>Structure of policies to promote women's participation in the labor market (non-discrimination, maternity leave, kindergartens, flexible working hours)</p> <p>Structure of policies to promote gender equality in wage and career opportunities</p>	<p>Length of experience and ways of combining family obligations and paid work</p> <p>Dispositions, established ways of seeing and doing, taken-for-grants:</p> <p>Perceptions and judgments of self and others:</p> <p>Knowledge, skills, competence:</p> <p>Reactions to existing patterns of roles, norms and power relations related to women's participation in the labor market</p>	<p>Experience of gaps in disposal income and career opportunities between men and women</p> <p>Use and take up of policy measures to promote gender equality</p> <p>Use and take up of policy measures to promote labor market participation</p> <p>Use of strategies to combine family obligations and paid work</p>	<p>Availability, adequacy and relevance of policies to promote labor market participation and gender equality, as perceived by the women</p> <p>Experience and reaction related to efforts to combine paid work and family obligations</p>	<p>Stability or change in: policies promoting gender equality</p> <p>Gaps in disposable income, prevalence of discrimination, exclusion</p> <p>Structures of maternity leave, equality in paid/unpaid work</p>	<p>Stability or change in prevalence of discrimination as perceived by the women,</p> <p>improved / deteriorated economic freedom as perceived by the women</p> <p>improved / deteriorated standard of living, as perceived by the women</p> <p>Improved/ deteriorated gender equality as perceived by the women</p>
Possible data sources	Existing documentary material, available quantitative surveys	Qualitative data from interviews with women	Quantitative data from surveys (e.g., ILO, UN, national surveys in Argentina)	Qualitative data from interviews with women	Existing documentary material, available quantitative surveys	Qualitative data from interviews with women

Table 1: Structuration theory

4.3 Summary

To answer the research questions and to do the analysis, we chose to use Sen's capability approach and Stones and O'Reilly's (2005 and 2012 in Hvinden and Halvorsen 2017) understanding of structuration theory. In addition to look at how women cope with both paid employment and family life we also wanted to know what measures are in place, and what measures need to be implemented, to ensure that women can get a sense of mastering an everyday life which involves both having small children and domestic work at home, and being in employment.

Capability approach is appropriate to use in this thesis because we are going into how women themselves experience having children and working in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Do they feel that they have the opportunity to live the life they want when it comes to combining employment and family life? Do they believe that they can live the way they want to the fullest? For Sen, the core issue is not only what individuals choose, but the choices that they would make if they had the capabilities to lead the kind of lives that they want to lead and also reason for value. If women had the opportunity not to work, would they choose that or would they stay in work?

The capability approach is defined by its focus on the significance of individuals' capability of achieving the kind of lives they have reason to value. Sen believes utilitarians put too much emphasis on the individual's perception of happiness. Sen looks at structures in society, in politics, culture, and family, and then examine the possibilities for people to achieve their goals (actually achieve). The fundamental concepts are functionality and capacity. If society gives people these opportunities, they have real freedom (effective freedom). In addition, people must have reasonable grounds for their values (reason for value).

O'Reilly goes into the four factors: Internal structures: how women view their capabilities, values, and beliefs and how the social norms affect the ability women have when it comes to working. The external structure: If the workplace helps the woman when she has a child, by for example offering flexible hours while the children are small, and in what way. Practices: for instance, having a maid to help out with the children and the domestic work, help from family or friends or making an agreement with the workplace to work less during the time the child is small. Outcomes: What the consequences when it comes to gender equality, women's

opportunities for participation and economic independence will be. Because we both look into the internal factors and the external factors, we choose to use both capability approach and structuration theory.

5 Research methodology and data

5.1 Selection of data

Our aim was to find out how the participants themselves experienced combining work and childcare in Buenos Aires. We believe it is important to go into their own understanding of this, to learn what it is like to be a working mother in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

When conducting research, there are several options. The quantitative method focuses on numbers and statistics, while the qualitative approach emphasizes in-depth interviews and the participants' perception of a topic. We chose to do a qualitative research because this type of research allows you to emphasize on words rather than on quantification when collecting and analyzing the data. A qualitative method is concerned with words rather than numbers, according to Alan Bryman (2012).

Bryman (2012) describes six steps within qualitative research. Starting with making general research question(s), then select relevant site(s) and subjects. Further collecting the relevant data, and then the interpretation of the data before conceptual and theoretical work (and then maybe back to the interpretation of data, and finding out if more collection of data is needed). The final step is writing down findings and give conclusions. This opens the possibility to investigate the life of the individuals in the research.

We wanted the personal experience of the participants, for them to be able to elaborate and add information and get their perception of the theme in the best possible way. Therefore, we chose to use semi-structured interviews. When using semi-structured interviews, the same questions are asked, but the method opens for going outside the interview guide if appropriate. You can also ask participants to elaborate and ask follow-up questions. This method allows for more personal and comprehensive answers (Bryman 2012). Later in this chapter, we go further into the qualitative method and the use of semi-structured interviews. As mentioned in Chapter 1, we used the snowball technique to obtain informants. This involved us using the first interviewee to gather informants.

To find the relevance of the topic in the research, we chose to gather previous research on this topic from Argentina and other Latin-American countries. Moreover, we chose to use

literature dealing with the subject from the Western and the Scandinavian context, as we are from Norway and this clearly has an impact on us. Further, we found it interesting to look at the lines between Argentina and the Western countries, where the welfare state is well developed, and the focus on working women has been relevant for a long time.

5.2 Research design

5.2.1 Qualitative research method and semi-structured interviews

As mentioned, to answer the research questions, we used a qualitative research method and semi-structured interviews. John W. Creswell (2013) argues that qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging procedures and questions, data collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell 2013).

The final written report has a flexible structure in qualitative research. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation. Qualitative methods typically have emerging methods, open-ended questions, interview data, observation data, document data and audiovisual data. They often use text and image analysis, and themes and patterns interpretation (Creswell 2013).

Bryman (2012) believes that qualitative interviewing tends to be much less structured than quantitative research. In qualitative interviewing, 'rambling' is often encouraged, because it gives insight into what the interviewee considers important. Interviewers can also depart significantly from any schedule or guide that is being used. They can ask follow-up questions and also vary the order and even the wording of questions. The researcher wants detailed, rich answers (Bryman 2012). For these reasons, we found qualitative interviewing suitable for this research.

5.2.2 Semi-structured interview

Steinar Kvale (2001) argues that a qualitative research interview is the exchange of views between two people talking about a theme relevant to both. The interviewer aims to collect

data or receive opinions based on the interviewee's personal experiences, unaffected by leading questions. The research interview builds on the everyday dialogue, but is still a professional conversation. Kvale (2001) defines the semi-structured interview as an interview aimed at obtaining descriptions of the interviewees' life, to make interpretations of the described phenomena. Using an interview as a research method becomes an asking and listening approach, that aims to produce thoroughly proven knowledge (Kvale 2001).

Kvale (2001) argues that the research interview is not a conversation between equal participants because the researcher defines and controls the situation. The interviewer determines the topic and follows up on the interviewees' answers. Further, the strength of interviewing is that it captures the variation in the interviewees' perception of a topic and thus provides a picture of a diverse and controversial human world (Kvale 2001).

The interviewee's statements may occasionally be ambiguous, which may reflect contrasts in the person's life. Further, various interviewees may bring forward different statements about the same subject, depending on their sensitivity to and knowledge of the subject. Qualitative interviews aim to acquire qualitative knowledge and does not attempt to quantify (Kvale 2001).

According to Bridget Byrne (2004), one must be aware of all different variables which affect the outcome when using interviewing as a tool for social research. This includes who is being interviewed, who is doing the interview, the location and the form of questioning. Interview techniques can be classified into three categories: unstructured, semi-structured and structured. Byrne (2004) argues that that qualitative interview often refers to in-depth or semi-structured interviews and are often used to encourage to talk about a particular range of topics. In this study, it is about work-life balance and equality between genders. One of the reasons a semi-structured interview can be a useful method for this research is that the use of open-ended and flexible questions makes it possible to access individual values. It provides a possibility for understanding, interpretation, and experience as opposed to schematic interviews where ticketing is used, and the participants have a few options (Byrne 2004).

According to Bryman (2012), a semi-structured interview is a term that covers a broad range of types. It often refers to a context with a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview guide, with possibilities to vary the sequence of questions. The questions are a

bit more general in their frame of reference from those typically found in a structured interview schedule. The interviewer usually has the opportunity to ask further questions in response to what are seen as significant replies. Questions may not follow exactly in the way outlined on the schedule, and the questions not included in the guide may be asked as the interviewer picks up on interesting remarks from the interviewees (Bryman 2012). The interview process is flexible and partly structured. However, all the questions are asked in a similar wording, and one does follow a script to a certain extent.

Since the purpose of our interviews is to try to find out what women themselves think about the topic, it is useful to use a semi-structural interview. When questions are not completely set, it is possible to improvise to some extent around the answers and thus gain a deeper insight into the women's mindset. One of the advantages of using semi-structured interview was the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. For example, if the women said that they did not get enough help from the state after having children, we could ask if they could elaborate on this.

We were two when conducting the interviews, and we chose to have one of us asking the questions, while the other one took notes. We audiotaped all the interviews, to be able to go through them and write down whatever we might have missed during the actual session. Furthermore, we saved the audiotapes, so that we could also go back and listen during the process of writing and analyzing the findings. We spent a lot of time listening to the tapes to fully understand what the women had said. Robert Silverman (1993) argues that recordings and transcripts can offer highly reliable records to which researchers can return as they develop a new hypothesis. Transcripts of such recordings, based on standardized conventions, provide an excellent record of «naturally occurring» interactions (Silverman 1993).

Since our Spanish was not at a sufficient level for conducting the interviews in Spanish ourselves, and as we would lose the opportunity to talk to a lot of women if only doing the interviews in English, we used an interpreter for those who preferred speaking Spanish. This was 10 out of 17 women. Having an interpreter is challenging in many ways, as you are talking less directly to the women. The possibility that something gets lost in translation is also there. However, since we always recorded the interviews on our phones and listened to them afterwards, we would have some extra time to listen to the Spanish and understand

more of it ourselves. The audio recordings were deleted after the transcription of the interviews was conducted.

We started the interview introducing ourselves and the interpreter. We emphasized that their participation was voluntary. Before starting the interviews, the women had to read through and sign the consent form. The consent form included that any information obtained in connection with the study and that could be identified with the interviewee would remain confidential and be disclosed only with their permission or as required by law. Subject identities would be kept confidential by password on our computer and smartphone which we were using to audiotape the interview. Participation in the study was voluntary, so the women could decline to answer any question they wished. We informed the women that they could stop the interview at any time. Finally, we told them that their name, or any other personally identifying information, would not appear in the final paper resulting from the study. The consent form included our contact information.

5.3 Our starting point

The idea of research is to study phenomena as neutral as possible. However, everyone has their own point of view. The researchers' origin and pre-thoughts about the topic are important to have in mind. You can never entirely escape your background.

It seemed as women of Argentina had a lot of benefits compared to women in other countries in Latin America. At the same time, Argentina is a country in Latin America with strong influence from the Catholic church and what we perceive as «macho culture». We had the impression that typically, the man was the head of the house, and usually in the highest positions in society. Moreover, we had read that women still typically earned only 75 percent of what men earned (Montserrat, Lassaga and D'Annunzio 2006).

We are two young women, coming from a western culture, without own children. Our reference point is our parents, how we were raised, and how our parents resolved to have small children and working. This build on the Scandinavian model. According to Law on Working Environment and Employment (arbeidsmiljøloven) § 12-5. Parental leave: the parents in Norway are entitled to leave under the provisions of this section and §§ 12-2 and 12-4 for a total of twelve months. Ten weeks of the leave are reserved for the father.

Furthermore, the child is often being sent to kindergarten at an early age, as both parents often go back to full or part time work after the leave. This affects our view of gender equality.

When conducting research in another country, it is important to reflect on your own background. It affects how you develop your research questions, as we cannot avoid having prejudices or specific ideas about how things should be. It is crucial to constantly be humble and seek the best ways to comply with the country's rules and norms while doing the interviews and to try in the best way possible to understand the women in their social, cultural and political context. In the meeting with the women, we come with our own context, our horizons. The women have their horizons. It is difficult for us to know their horizons with the prejudices we have. For us it is normal that both parents go back to work and that men also take parental leave.

According to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, the hermeneutic circle refers to the interplay between our self-understanding and our understanding of the world. The hermeneutic circle entails an existential task with which each of us is confronted (Ramberg and Gjesdal 2005). Furthermore, Heidegger thinks it is misleading to view understanding as an «activity of a subject». As a society, we share a common experience horizon. Meeting with history and its experience horizon, we can change and expand our own. In this way, the hermeneutic circle is not a closed circle, but an open horizon.

In the view of another German philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and his way of viewing hermeneutics, the epistemological assumptions are rooted in understanding and how to achieve an understanding of a problem. All understanding and knowing inevitably involves some prejudices. Dialogical encounter with what is at once alien to us, demands reflection over your own life horizon (Ramberg and Gjesdal 2005).

The aim of this research is to understand how women in Argentina perceive their opportunity to work while having children in the context of a society that may not facilitate them to have the same opportunities as men. Another aim is to understand what they perceive as important to feel satisfied with their life situation and look at necessary policies in that direction.

According to Gadamer, knowledge arises in the hermeneutical circle. Gadamer's hermeneutics is a practical activity. If you through the processes change some of your past prejudices, it follows that something should be done (Ramberg and Gjesdal 2005). For Gadamer, prejudices is not something necessary negative, but one must be aware of them and put them at stake in meeting other people's life horizons.

The idea behind hermeneutics is that the researcher must seek to bring out the meanings of a text from the perspective of the author of the text. In this way, it will draw attention to the social and historical context within which the text was produced. A qualitative method, using semi-structured interviews can be hermeneutic, when it is sensitive to the context within which the text was created (Bryman 2012). In this study, it will be the understanding the women have about their life situation, and the society they are a part of.

5.4 Localization selection

As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, our plan was to go further into the grassroots economy factories in Buenos Aires. This was one of the reasons we decided to go to Argentina in the first place. Due to the fact that this was not possible, we had to change our original plan, and started to look at work-life balance for women with higher education.

With the theme of work-life balance for women, we could potentially have done this research in any part of the world. Buenos Aires, Argentina was exciting to us, because of the diversity. It has a lot of European influence and is an urban area in the southern part of Latin-America as well. Argentina has a past of female presidents and beneficial laws promoting women participation in politics.

5.5 The participants and their profiles

Table 2: Participant Overview

	Age	Civil status	Kids	Education
1 Mia	35	Divorced	1	Degree in License of Communication
2 Carla	36	Partner	1	Political science and master in social policy and development
3 Frida	38	Married	2	Master degree in the relationship between sociology and NGOs
4 Anna	38	Married	3	Master in Graphic design
5 Lilly	39	Married	2	Psychology (phycologist)
6 Greta	40	Married	2	Degree in administration
7 Beata	42	Partner	2	Phycology (phycologist), and NGO management
8 Jill	44	Divorced	2	Master degree in Politics
9 Oline	48	Remarried	1	Master degree in social and local development
10 Hanah	50	Married	3	Law (lawyer)
11 Ane	51	Divorced	1	Master in Mathematics
12 Yulia	53	Divorced	1	Master of public relation, working on a PhD in Social Sociology
13 Lula	55	Divorced	2	International Politics
14 Silvia	62	Divorced	1	Degree in Social Care
15 Sofia	67	Married	4	Sociology and master degree in social psychology
16 Monica	71	Married	4	Law (lawyer)
17 Cristina	78	Married	3	Master in literature

Table 1 gives an overview of the 17 participants with their age, civil status, number of children and education. There could have been many ways of choosing participants for our research, and as mentioned in the introduction, we had to make some changes to our original plan due to availability. We interviewed 17 women from 35 and up to 78 years, all living and taking up employment in Buenos Aires, Argentina. They all had children. On average the women under 50 had 1,8 children, and those over 50 had 2,4 children. The women were all in high positions in different types of sectors, and all of them had a university degree of some kind. They all had the same puzzle of balancing a career and a family life involving children.

We got the impression that all the women we interviewed were active and committed women, concerned with gender equality and engaged in the topic. Several of the women spoke for a long time and elaborated around the questions regarding women's rights when they have children. Equality between men and women was a subject that engaged many of them as well.

As shown earlier, there were practical reasons why we ended up with this selection and our supervisor got us in contact with influential women at the beginning of the research process. However, as mentioned, what we knew about Argentina up front was that there were many successful women in higher positions. For these reasons, we found it interesting to study work-life balance in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

5.6 Data collection

The process of collecting the data went on from our arrival in Buenos Aires at the end of August until the middle of November 2016. We decided to stay in the city while writing to have the possibility to collect more data if necessary.

We started by making an interview guide with questions regarding women and work-life balance. The interview began with some background information, then questions regarding their workplace, evaluation of their current position, equality at the workplace, if their parents had been working, their relationship with colleagues, family and friends and finally questions regarding having children while working, help from state/workplace/family or others. Finally, we asked how the women perceived women's opportunities to having employment while having children at home, and what the barriers in having children and working were for them.

We wanted the women to choose the venue for the interview because we had been told that Argentinian women were very busy and had tight schedules. We did not want them to travel too far. The plan was that the interviews should last around one hour. We conducted most of the interviews in the women`s workplace (as this was often what was most convenient for them), and the rest either in their home (three interviews), or in coffee shops (two interviews). There were benefits and challenges with these venues. One of the interviews took place in an open office landscape, and we noticed that the woman gave short answers to questions regarding the workplace. This also applied to personal questions. Perhaps we would have received other answers, if the interview had taken place at her house or a more private venue. We found that the best environment for the interviews was in their home where the women seemed more relaxed. Further, we had some questions directly about their relationship with supervisors, colleagues and so on, which might be difficult to answer being in the workplace.

However, we also had questions about personal relationships with husband and other family members, which might be difficult to answer in their home. Being in a coffee shop was good in terms of being neither between bosses and colleagues nor family members, but it could also be very noisy. Having random people around might have made them more conscious about what they said.

5.7 Data analysis

5.7.1 Thematic analysis

The semi-structured interviews we conducted were rich in content as the printed interviews were around five to six pages each. With 17 interviews in total, there was a lot of material. To analyze the empirical material and present and comprehend the data, we used thematic analysis.

The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify patterns of meaning across the data collected. These patterns are identified through a process of data familiarization, coding and theme development. The thematic analysis suits questions related to the people's experiences, views, and perceptions. By going carefully through the data collected from the interviews and the analysis of the text, it is possible to look for verification or falsification by comparing patterns (themes), the actors, the method we used, etc. Then we can compare the trends (if there are any) (Bryman 2012).

As already mentioned, we started by transcribing all the interviews. Then we organized all the material, both the notes from the audio tape recordings and the written notes, and put together all relevant notes. Almost all the 17 interviews lasted more than one hour, and the process of transcribing was very time-consuming. We read through the transcripts to recapture the general themes of the interviews. We tried to find similarities and differences between the answers. For instance, we looked for patterns in the different age groups, different social groups, the number of children and relationship status. To find the patterns of the interviews, we used markers with different colors where each category had its own color. The categories were, for instance, the women's view on having children and working, their position at work, their opinion about equality and how they perceived family politics in Argentina today.

We also investigated whether there were substantial differences in the age groups. Therefore, we divided the interviewees into the age categories below 45 and over 45 years. Because of the age differences, we could look at the work-life balance in different generations. We chose to ask all the women (depending on their age) about how they perceived their own possibilities compared to their mothers and/or their daughters' opportunities for a work-life balance. In addition to that, we looked into new strategies in younger generations.

Using thematic analysis helped us find that having a maid was a pattern in the findings. When we identified a pattern, we went through all the interviews again to look closer at this. Since we were two, we both went through all the interviews finding patterns, and then compared what we found. We could thus decide which quotes and information we both considered being relevant and meaningful, and consolidating the most important in the findings. We had to read the transcripts carefully many times to code them and find patterns in the data material. Finally, we gathered the categories and found relevant quotes and statements from the interviewees, and found detailed descriptions that were useful to write the findings.

5.8 Strengths and limitations

The validity of the research is limited when it comes to generalizing the findings, since only 17 participants were interviewed. Further, the women were educated and were more or less part of the same social group living in the capital, which will give a small picture of reality. On the other hand, snowball sampling techniques were used to select some of the participants, which impacted the prospect of the research findings generalizability because the women got in contact with friends from the same social position.

According to Robert Yin (2014), having some theory or theoretical propositions can play a critical role when generalizing the lessons learned from a case study. He characterizes this role of theory as analytic generalization, contrasted with statistical generalization.

In statistical generalization, an inference is made about a population on the basis of empirical data collected from a sample. The method is for instance often used when doing surveys or analyzing archival data. Yin (2014) argues that you should not consider statistical generalization to be the way of generalizing the findings from your case study. You should rather think of it as the opportunity to shed empirical light about theoretical concepts or

principles, like the motive of a laboratory investigator in conceiving of and then conducting a new experiment. Both kinds of study will strive for generalizable findings or lessons learned, that go beyond the setting for the particular case or investigation. Yin (2014) gives the example that the lessons learned could assume the form of a working hypothesis, (Cronbach 1975 in Yin 2014), either in reinterpretation the results of existing studies of other concrete situations or define new research focusing on additional specific situations. The aim of an analytic generalization is not just to contribute to abstract theory building, but to generalize to these other concrete situations (Yin 2014).

In our study, the sample of respondents is not large or representative enough for a statistical generalization. However, it is possible to make an analytical generalization according to Yin (2014), by seeking out patterns in the analysis of the findings and combining relevant theory with the empirical data from the study of work-life balance for 17 women in Argentina.

The use of qualitative method and semi-structured interview can limit the validity of the research. Some of the interviews may have different outcomes since the women might focus on various subjects. Some of the interviews will have more data on the society and what policies is needed for women to go back to work after childbirth, while some interviews will have more data on gender equality.

As mentioned we had the opportunity that one of us could ask questions, while the other took notes during the interview. This strengthened our validity because it provided a greater opportunity not to lose valuable information during the interview. We also told the interviewees that if there was something they had forgotten, they could send us an email. We tried in the best way to get descriptive complementary interviews and allowed women to express their personal opinions, but we have for instance not been able to organize focus groups or use quantitative analysis. Therefore, the validity of the study may be impaired.

The women`s choice of venue could also be a limitation. We wanted the interview to last around one hour, and we learned that the women we interviewed at their workplace could often say that did not have that much time after all, even though we had explained that we needed an hour before the interview. We learned that having the interviews at their homes was the best solution.

Our origin may also be a limitation. The women we interviewed were aware that Norway has good maternity leave schemes and that the society has come a long way in gender equality. This could have been a limitation in the way that the women could give answers that fit better into this model than their reality. It could also be a limitation as we might interpret their answers out of the idea that the Norwegian model is better, which might just as well not be the case.

5.8.1 The use of interpreter

Allison Squires (2008) has done a research review about methodological challenges in cross-language qualitative research. This study concludes that those researchers doing cross-language studies needs to take into count the methodological issues regarding language barriers between researchers and participants more systematically than most do.

Temple, Edwards, and Alexander (2006) argue that for what they name ‘secondary researchers’ it is never possible to get the same relationship with the participants. However, they do acknowledge that it is feasible to examine the context in cross-language research as a part of the practice and to debate how it shapes a research. Squires (2008) also concludes with highlighting the importance of systematically addressing the language barriers in a qualitative method research.

The fact that we did not speak fluently Spanish and had to use an interpreter clearly had some impact on our research. Relevant answers could get lost in translation, and the translator might misunderstand. Furthermore, English is not our first language either, and this could also lead to miscommunication.

Another challenge was that we did speak a bit of Spanish, and the participants in most cases also spoke a bit of English. Sometimes this made it tempting to start talking directly to the interviewee and not to use the interpreter when we understood each other. However, to keep it organized and to make sure there were no misunderstandings, we learned to be strict with only speaking English and having the participant only speaking Spanish, so that the interpreter could translate everything. A benefit we experienced from understanding some Spanish was that after the interview we could listen to the audio tape, and ‘check’ the translating.

Along the way, we considered the articles of Squires (2008) and Temple, Edwards, and Alexander (2006), and systematically addressed the language barriers. In the beginning, we sat down with the interpreter after each interview, to evaluate and to address issues we might have experienced. For instance, in the first interviews with the interpreter, we experienced that the interviewee spoke very long before the interpreter translated shortly what the woman had said. We thereby asked her to next time bring a notepad where she could write notes if women had long answers. We could still occasionally feel that we lost information that could be relevant and that the connection with the interviewees became weak, but throughout the research process we spent a lot of time after each meeting listening to the audio tapes and make the answers and quotes as close to the actual sayings as possible. We aimed to obtain the women's emotions and their meaning, and in our findings (Chapter 6, 7 and 8), we tried to use quotes from the interviews as directly as possible even if we acknowledge that this was difficult due to the language barrier.

Another factor was that the highly educated women often would express a feeling of inferior because they were not able to speak English. We also saw that when the interviewee spoke English, it was a better flow in the interview, and it was easier to get the women to deepen their answers. When we became more used to having an interpreter, we learned that we sometimes had to interrupt the interviewee, to give room for the translating in order not to lose valuable information.

Before we started conducting the research, we had a prior discussion with the interpreter about the purpose of the interview, ethical issues, and our concerns in interviewing someone from a different culture. In this way, we could clarify the function of, and terms used within, the interview. The use of an interpreter may have caused the loss of valuable information and may be a limitation of this study, but it was also what allowed us to carry it out.

5.8.2 Ethical considerations

The topic of our study is in theory not very sensitive. However, we always kept in mind that the interviewees might view it differently, and we tried to be sensitive and consider their feelings about the topic. Even though we did not use sensitive personal data, it was important to be careful with the data we collected, and all the women and the interpreter had to sign a consent form. If information from the interviews with the women is leaked, it may have

consequences for women both at home and in the workplace, especially on questions regarding their situation with the supervisor, equal wage and equal opportunities at work.

According to Kvale (2001), informed consent means that the interviewees are informed of the overall objectives of the study, the main features of the project plan, and possible advantages and disadvantages of participating. Confidentiality means that no personal data that can reveal the identity of the interviewees can be published (Kvale 2001).

The approval from NSD (Norwegian Centre for Research Data) is attached. According to the NSD, personal data collected for research purposes should not be stored longer than what is necessary for the purpose of the project. When we collected the data, we did not use names or any other forms of recognition of the women. Our project was subject to notification because we processed personal data using computer-based equipment (recorded the interviews on our smartphones). Audio recordings (which can identify individuals) must be deleted to be considered anonymous according to NSD. We deleted all the records of the interviews after we had completed the transcription of the data.

5.9 Summary

This research uses a qualitative method, with semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis of them. 17 mothers with higher education in Buenos Aires, Argentina were interviewed about work-life balance and gender equality. There are many ethical considerations before doing research, and as we used an interpreter for more than half of the interviews, this has also been important to consider along the way.

6 Successful women of Argentina

As mentioned, in this research 17 well educated, professional women in Buenos Aires, Argentina were interviewed about gender equality and work-life balance. They were all combining work with small children, either at the moment, or in the past. We tried to get their own personal perception, and the findings are based on their answers. What became clear was that, in their opinion, to be a successful woman, you needed to be able to handle many different obligations and relations. You should to be a god mother, wife /girlfriend, friend, employee and colleague. Furthermore, you needed to work out and be fit, always look good and be fully engaged in everything you do. As one of the interviewed women, Oline (48), put it, this had changed over the last generations: *“Being a woman at home has become easier in the sense of having more equipment: washing machine, dishwasher and so on and so on. But back in the days most women only had the house and their kids to think of. Nowadays, we have other types of slaveries: The social demands: to look and be perfect in every setting of your life.”*

We chose to divide our findings in three chapters. This chapter considers what it means to be a successful woman for these women, and if they feel like they could be one. Then we look specifically into the different roles it involves. The next chapter looks more specifically into work-life and free time. Then the last chapter considers how their view on raising children in the society is changing.

This chapter continues with a short profile of four of the interviewed women. Furthermore, it goes into the general findings of all the participant’s perceptions of success, and all the different roles and relations they are engaged in, in everyday life.

6.1 Four women - four stories

To start with, we went deeper into the interviews of four of the women. The only common denominator between these four women was that they had children, jobs and higher education. Two of them had a bachelor degree as well as a master or post graduate studies. One of these had a degree in graphic design, and one had a master degree and was currently working on a PhD. Two of the participants lived alone, while one with her husbands and one with her boyfriends. Some had small children, and one of them had a grandchild.

We chose to illustrate these exact interviews, due to the great variation in the women's responses. All the women had strong opinions regarding the subjects they saw as important e.g., women in the labor market, child raising prioritization, or the importance of family tradition and value. These four women gave us representative insights in their everyday struggles, obstacles and challenges when it comes to equality, work-life balance and being a modern woman in the context of present Buenos Aires, Argentina.

6.1.1 Yulia (53): A successful professional woman

Yulia had a degree in public relations, and she was at the moment working on a Ph.D. in sociology while teaching at three of the universities in Buenos Aires. Before having her first child, she worked in marketing. She got divorced when her daughter was just one year old. Today her daughter was 30 years old, and Yulia had a 2-year-old grandchild. Currently, she lived alone, nearby her daughter. The interview was conducted with the help of an interpreter, as she preferred to speak in Spanish.

We had just sat down in a classroom at a university, with a woman in her early 50s, when it knocks on the door. She has another appointment with some students at one of the universities where she is teaching. She politely asks the students to wait outside until we have completed the interview (around one hour). One minute later the phone rings, she takes it and asks the person calling her to call her back. *"It was a colleague who wanted me to look through a paper with him."*

She further explained to us that she worked with marketing as well as at three different universities: *"I teach in three different universities. And I also work in a company – in external communication and media, this is my profession, beside teaching."*

She told us that she started working early. She began working in different clothing stores already when she was a teenager, and she had always been very independent. After graduating from university, she worked in an international relation company for thirty years, before she started in her current position. Here she worked with media and communication. We wanted to know how a normal day at work looked like for her: *"I don't live near here, so on Tuesdays I have to get up at 6 o'clock in the morning to travel for about 2 hours to go to another university in the city, and I stay there until around midday. Then I go to the*

company. At 6 o'clock in the afternoon I go to teach in this university, and then I go home at around 11 pm." She points out that this is her busiest day: *"On the other days I have other schedules, and they are not so bad. I go to the company in the morning, and then I teach in the afternoon."*

We understood that she is a very busy woman with a lot to do, even though her child was grownup and did no longer live with her. We wanted to know more and asked her to tell us about her everyday life, apart from work. She was glad to tell: *"When I get home I drink tea. I live alone and I have three dogs. I watch TV and try to relax (...)."*

She continued by telling us about her family and family obligations which were not only her child: *"I often meet with my family, and before my mother passed away I used to look after her on the weekends. At a specific age you have to look after both parents and children. It is a lot."* She paused and continued with talking about other things: *"I go shopping things for my house, because I am fixing it. I hire people to help me at home, painting and so on. I don't have time to do it myself. I also try to cook, even if I am so busy. I have a granddaughter, and when I meet her, we play a lot. I go out, to the movies, or to meet friends."*

We continued by asking her if she feels that she has enough time to spend with her friends: *"I am very busy. Currently we stay in touch through social networks. I have a lot of responsibility, and so do my friends, and they have small children. Anyhow, we manage to meet at least once a month, go out for dinner and so on. When I was younger, I used to go out with friends more..."*

Because she worked so much, we asked her if she felt that she got enough help to take care of her child when she was young, while she was at work: *"My mom used to help me, since she was not working when my daughter was young (...)."* She paused and continued: *"This is something I cannot do with my granddaughter. Nowadays we grandmothers are so busy, working a lot. Our children must leave their children at day care or something like that. I always worked while having a child. And because I had a divorce early, I had to work, but even if I had not divorced, I would still work all the time."* When it came to having a maid at home, she told us: *"I currently have a maid, but during that time when my daughter was young, I did not."*

We asked her how she perceived women's opportunities to have employment while having small children at home in Argentina: *"I had the opportunity to work, but I only had one child. My daughter has one child today and wants to have another, but she works a lot and so does her husband. They also want to buy a house, but they are thinking that it is not the right time to have another child now."* She explained how it is impossible to do it all: *"They are choosing other things than children right now: they want to progress in other areas."* Then she continued to tell us about herself and about changes over the years: *"Also, when I had my child I decided to continue working and progressing my career. The average age for becoming a parent has changed from previous times. Women postpone having children. Maybe they wait until they are 30, or almost 40.. They just live first, and have children later. It is not easy to have children and work at the same time in Argentina."*

Yulia was particularly concerned with the role of women in society and the importance of the economic position of the country: *"Women do not have the primer role in the society. Also, we always have all these economic crises in our country that makes it difficult."* She was quiet for a while and then continued: *"Sometimes women have to choose between professional career or have children, which is difficult. I think it was easier for me than for my daughter, because it was easier to get a job back then. Today it is more difficult, and not a lot of job opportunities. Right now there is a change in society also: There are a lot of divorces, and family structures are in change."*

Further, we asked her if there were any barriers in having small children and working for her personally: *"I missed a lot of things. Having just one child made it easier, but it was still a lot: to watch her grow up, be there in the small things, be with her. I would be with her and enjoy it in the holidays and so on, but my mom would take her to school and so on in everyday life, not me."* She pointed out that she was very fortunate to have her mother, but that she wished for not having needed her help so much.

We also wanted to know how she and her husband had divided the housework and taking care of the child before they got divorced. She tells us a story similar to many: *"Our daughter was very small when we got divorced. Before this the both of us worked, and the tasks at home were more for the women according to him, both house work and taking care of the children."* She was not satisfied about this and she told us: *"Today it is different, but back then it was more the women who had to do more. They had to take care of the children*

and take care of the house. Today tasks are divided: I can, for instance, see how my daughter and her husband divide the tasks.”

When we asked her if she thought there were many women in Argentina would choose not to work if they had the opportunity, she answered: *“I know women that choose not to work. I cannot tell you a number, but most women choose to work.”* She also told us that it was getting easier for women as workplaces facilitated them more in combining: *“Companies are becoming aware of this situation, and try to keep women working, by for instance giving them time to breastfeed during the day and so on. It depends on the company. But maybe you sometimes can work at home. Like on the birthday of your child you can stay at home.”* She explained that she was very satisfied that companies nowadays did take this into account and that they tried to make it easier for women to balance work and family life.

At the end of the interview we wanted to know if she was satisfied with her life situation. She was thinking for a while, and she said: *“My divorce was like a breaking point. Some people get stuck after a divorce, but for me not. I started going further in my career, kept studying and working. I think it was very good that I was able to continue working and maintain my job, to have my own money.”* She then pointed out how glad she was that society was in change, but that there was still a long way to go: *“It is very good that women are progressing in society when it comes to education and career, but we are not there yet, there is still a lot of things to work on.”*

The students sitting outside seemed impatient, and we thanked her for the interview. We had gotten more insight into the life of Argentine women, their hectic everyday lives and how important it was to work hard and succeed in many different areas. This was a woman who was concerned about equality and that women should have the same opportunities as men in the labor market as well as in education.

6.1.2 Anna (38): A Family oriented woman

Anna was a 38 years old woman from Buenos Aires, who had lived in Norway and who was married to a Norwegian man. In this way, we were given the insights of a woman with experience from two different countries.

Anna had a bachelor degree in graphic design from Buenos Aires, and today she worked freelance as a graphic designer. She told us that she had Norwegian customers, for instance a big construction company, which she was working for on that day. She helped them designing logos for their company and with making layouts for commercials. Anna was very satisfied with her work situation, because she had the opportunity to work from home, and the working hours were good because of the time difference to Norway. Due to the fact that Norway is four hours ahead of Argentina, she could help her children get ready for school before having skype meetings with the costumers. Her husband also worked as a freelancer, but he worked for an Argentinian company and had to go to the office early in the morning every day. She had lived her whole life in Buenos Aires, except from one year in Norway in 2014. She had three children, at the age of 9, 7 and 4.

We started the interview talking Norwegian but quickly agreed that we should speak English, as her Norwegian skills had some shortcomings (as well as our Spanish skills). She told us that she thought our research was very interesting and that she had some point to make on how Norwegians raise their children. This was something we wanted to learn more about, but as always we started the interview by asking her to tell us about her work experience over the years: *“I studied graphic design, and in this field, you need job experience while you are studying. I started working already when I was on my second year in the university, in three different studios, and I worked there for 5 years.”* During this time, she met her Norwegian husband: *“Then I moved to Norway, where I started in a graphic design studio in Oslo for one year. I then moved back to Argentina, and I have since then worked from home with my Norwegian costumers. I work at home, in my living room, very convenient when you have small children.”* She did however point out that it had its downsides as well: *“It is very informal, I get payed per hour with my costumers.”* This meant that she had no rights of getting maternity leave or any other economical substitutes from the Argentinian government (or the Norwegian).

We further wanted to know if her parents were employed when she was young: *“My mother never worked when I was a child. She got a high school degree when I was 16 years old and worked a bit after that. My father worked full time always.”* Anna was very glad that her mother worked now, but she also truly appreciated that she stayed at home when she was a child.

We wanted to find out how a typical day looked like for this woman, so we asked her to tell us more about her everyday life: *“I wake up at 7.30. The kids go to school at 8.30. My husband takes them to school. Then I have a maid who comes to help me. She arrives at 8.30. She takes my girl to kindergarten.”* She smiled and underlined that she was very satisfied to have this lady to help her. She continued: *“I work until 12 - 12.30. Then I get the girl from the kindergarten. The rest of the day, I might have courses, or I might go out with a friend.”* She continued with telling us about her maid: *“Since I got the first kid I have always had a person helping me. For the last six years, someone is there from 8.30-18.00. If the lady who helps out is able to, I ask her to sleep at our house two days a week. Then I can go out with my husband or relax.”*

Then we asked if she felt like she was getting enough help to take care of her children while she was at work, and who she would receive help from. Anna answered: *“I get enough help from my maid. Many Argentinians are good at using their mothers for help, but my mother lives far from here. My oldest brother is handicapped. He lives with our parents and they have enough to do.”* She continued: *“I try to be independent. I work at home and have a maid. If the maid is sick I work at home so I have flexibility.”*

Furthermore, we continued the interview by asking how she and her husband divided housework and taking care of the children: *“I’m not a normal Argentinian! It is so luxurious to be married to a Norwegian! My friends hate him, because he is so much better than their husbands!”* She laughed: *“He helps out with everything. I do less than my husband. I do a lot less than Norwegian women as well, because we have a maid. I feel very spoiled. I never cook, never clean.”*

When we asked her about changes over the last generations regarding men participation at home, she answered: *“I know that this is changing because more women at the age of my mother, are working now. There are a lot of new solutions now, like places you can leave your child, in a day care.”* She pointed out that this depends on the social position: *“In my social class I don’t know many older women that work, maximum 5. So, most of them can help their children with their grandchildren. It also depends on which social level you are from. I did not get any child support, school and health insurance are private.”*

We wanted to know how she perceived women's opportunities to have employment while having small children at home, in present Argentina. This was something she was very engaged in and she had a lot to say: *"I have a lot of mixed feelings when a woman wants to have a career; and I don't really understand why women who have small children want to have a big career. I really have some big problems understanding why someone care more about Mr. Microsoft or Mr. Apple than their own kid! I don't understand their mind set!"* She looked upset about this thought, and she continued: *"My most important project in my life is my kids. I have been very lucky with my job. If I didn't have this flexible job, I don't know what I would do. No one can raise your child better than you."*

Further she told us that not everyone she knew thought the same way: *"I know a lot of women that work the whole day, that have high positions, and don't have time for their children. I do not understand that. This has been changing a lot, and I have more a mind setting of my mother and her generation."* She laughed a bit and continued: *"But I know that we can have a balance. I think if you have children you need to take a break from the career. If you have three kids its 10 years. Kindergarten is only a half day."* Then she told us that she did not like the system in Norway: *"I don't understand why kids in Norway get put away when they are only 1 year old. They are too young to stay away from their parent for a whole day. And then, when they are 6, they come home even later."* She explained us that she hoped society in Argentina never would come to this. The family traditions were very important to her, and something she did not want to lose.

We asked her about her thoughts on reasons for the changes in society, with regard to women taking on employment in bigger scale: *"Most of the women today have finished school. My mother's generation was not like that. Their goal was to find a husband, get married and have kids. My cousins who are 50 years old, have more kids and they quitted their job when they got kids. My generation have less kids and we continue working."*

We then asked her if she thought that many women in Argentina would choose not to work if they had the opportunity, also if she would stop working if she had the opportunity: *"I really don't think so. Women who are in a high social class position choose to work. I'm not talking about someone who really needs the money."* She pointed out again that the social class was of big importance in this matter: *"My friends from my social class is different. They can work from home, be entrepreneur. And the women who continue working in an office, a bank or so*

on, does it because they want to themselves.” She continued talking about her own life: “My husband does not have a steady income, so I cannot stop working. Therefore I never let myself think about not working. Also, I like to feel that I’m helping with the income. But, this is only because I feel I can combine it with the kids at home.”

We ended the interview by asking her if she was satisfied with her life situation: *“Yes, really satisfied. When I was a student I always thought of myself as a huge designer, like designing for Coca Cola. Having a big career. I know I could do much bigger things. When I got married and started having kids my priorities changed. But I am very happy now.”*

It is distinct that this woman had a slightly different view of child raising than many of the other women we interviewed. According to her, one should not in any case let the job or having a career come before the children. This implies things such as stop working while the children are young if you have to, and as she said it, make sure that the children are not raised by someone else. As we were about to end the interview she said: *“I would not like Argentinian women to loose their roots. Our basic roots are family, being with the children. I do not want that to change because of career. I do not want them to leave the children to maids all day to work. To be a CEO in a company and work 10 hours a day and have nice, well brought up kids, I do not think is possible.”*

6.1.3 Carla (36): A woman with high ambitions for women’s equality

Carla is a 36-year-old woman who had a young child at the moment (one and a half years old). She had studied political science and administration and had a master degree in social policy and development. She lived with her boyfriend, close to her job and to her mother and mother-in-law. This is an originally Peruvian woman, who had travelled a lot, and lived in England. She spoke perfect English, so the interview was conducted without an interpreter.

We started by asking her about her work experience over the years, and she answered: *“When I graduated I started in the non-profit sector (...). I worked there for 7 years, and then left for my master degree in London. I came back from London and wanted to try international organizations. Then I started in this work place where I work now.”*

Then she continued by telling us about the places she worked at the moment: *“My job is an institution related to education. We provide planning tools for the ministries of government. The education center is very conservative. In Argentina 65 % of those finishing education are girls. Not all boys finish middle school. I have to fight against the notions. Argentina is a middle-income country, but there is a lot to work on when it comes to working inclusion.”*

We could see that this was something she was passionate about, and she even had founded her own consultancy firm: *“53 percent of women have no security system for when they get older. Women are very vulnerable. There is a lot to achieve when it comes to economic rights. I have started my own consultancy firm. We work with different organizations trying to make these organizations equally open for women and men. We wish to help women realize the bias, help them to achieve higher positions. In the end, we want to achieve more gender equality and provide gender actions plan for companies.”* However, she told us that this company was not making much profit, yet, and she had to work in her other job to have an income: *“Right now, I have to keep both jobs, but my dream is to only work in my project.”*

On the question about whether she felt that she was getting enough help to take care of her child while being at work, she said: *“My arrangement is very practical, and the care around your kid is vital. The woman who takes care of my son I trust. I have known her for 10 years. Before she only came 2 times a week, to clean. Now she takes care of my son”* (she was referring to her maid). *“She arrives at 8.30 am and stays here until 5-5.30 pm. Her employment is a formal employment. We have to pay for her insurance etc.”*

She then told us that the rights of maids also was something she was fighting for, and not something that should be taken for granted: *“That this is formal work is new, and this has changed a lot of the reality for domestic workers, a major improvement. Until 5 years ago, the women working with me had no retirement plan, nothing.”* This woman was probably one of the most important persons in her life right now, and she was more than glad to pay her insurance: *“She is the most important partner for me right now. Even more than my husband,”* she laughed and continued: *“My husband comes back from work at around 8 in the night. However, I do get tons of help from other family members. My son has 6 aunts that want to see him, and 4 grandparents who really want to spend time with him.”*

Furthermore, we asked her about her perception on women's employment opportunities while having small children at home in Argentina: *"I think it depends. It is hard because most of the employers will think that you will have another child soon, you have to be very smart. It is discrimination, honestly. This is not like other countries. On the interview they can ask very personal questions. Do you have kids, are you planning to have kids, etc."* She explained us that this was not only limited to the formal jobs: *"The more informal the worse."* She further told us that even if her career was very important to her, she did have to make some changes while having young children: *"Because I have a small child at home, I ask the boss to not give me the biggest challenge right now. Some sees that as lack of commitment, but it is not that."*

She further told us that she did not think that you had to choose between career and having children: *"You just have to do everything at the right time, and also your workplace has to allow it."* Nevertheless, she also said that formal employment nowadays was not always flexible enough: *"I have a lot of friends who stayed in formal employment, but they are always looking for having more flexible arrangements. When you leave formal employments, it is very hard to come back. Choosing informal employment can be hard, because you might never get into the formal sector again. It's not like all women who gets a child, leaves the job market. They just need flexibility while the kids are young."*

We asked her how she and her boyfriend divided the domestic tasks in the house:

"I take care of cooking, buying the groceries etc. He fixes things in the house. It is kind of sexist division between us. But we do like the things we do. I like to cook, he likes to fix things. Regarding the gender agenda, we do not have a 50/50 split when it comes to taking care of the child." She told us that they did not always fully agree in this matter:

"When my son was born, we were fighting a lot about the fact that he was not home with our kid. But you also have to think about what is more functional when it comes to the income for the household. He makes three times more money than I do. The fact that I do not work that much, means I can spend time with my family, and he can make money. The first year was harder for me. Now I have accepted it."

We asked her if she thought that many women in Argentina would choose not to work if they had the opportunity, and it became clear that she did not believe it was necessarily children that made someone wanting to stay at home: *"I think also men would chose not to work. A lot*

of women use their children as an excuse for not doing work they really do not like. All they want to do is being home with their kids. I could not do that. If I stayed home with my kid I would go crazy.” She further explained that she did not think it was necessary for women to stay home all the time: *“Maternity is overemphasized, we do not need to stay home with them. I understand why you want to work less, but not to stay home for 10 years. I do not think it is a female thing, but I think women have the opportunity not to work, that is the difference.”*

6.1.4 Beata (42): A woman who stood up for her rights

This interview was conducted in English. This woman had also lived in England, and she spoke perfect English.

We met Beata in her office. The first thing she said when she walked into the meeting room was that she was very interested in our research topic. After the interview we understood why. She was a psychologist with post graduate studies in NGO (non-governmental organization) management. She told us that she had two children, respectively 5 and 6 years old. She lived with her husband, close to her workplace.

We started with the question about her work experience over the years: *“My degree is in psychology, but I always knew I didn’t want to be the classical psychologist, because I love working in teams. I went to London after I finished my degree, and I got in touch with a local NGO, working with migrants. What I really want to do, is to help people. Then I came back to Argentina, and I got this job 11 years ago. Here I communicate with NGOs, governments and universities, trying to fill the gap between the university and the private sector.”* She smiled, and seemed satisfied about her work, and what she did.

We asked if she felt that it was possible to combine having small children and working at the same time: *“I always wanted to spend a lot of time with my children. I really didn’t want to be here from 9 to 6 when I had kids, so I proposed to work half time here and half time home, but they said no. I said: I need to be with my children, so I will take a full maternity leave then. I was the first person in 90 years that spent 6 months in maternity leave. Nobody took the extra 6 months.”* It is clear that she thought this was unfortunate: *“If you have the economical opportunity you can do it. But nobody does it here in this company, because they*

don't really let you know about your rights. My mother is a lawyer, and she told me: it is legal. You can choose to do it.” At first her company did not want to give Beata the time off (even if she was entitled by law to have it), and they told her that they did not want to give her the flexibility she felt that she needed after the leave. However, in the end she was able to stay at home for 6 months, and then work part time, and she said: *“They made me an offer 4 month ahead of my maternity leave and said: Ok, you can work part time. I took that opportunity. Women have the skill of being effective, time effective. I did the same job as everyone else in 4 hours. I feel very good that I fought for my rights.”*

She told us that the division between men and women in her department of the work place was like this: *“5 men and 20 women. But in our board, there are 44 men and 1 woman. This is very representative of our reality. In top management there are no women, but in the middle, there are more. When you have kids, it is difficult to get the high positions.”* She further said that many women chose their children over the high positions: *“My friend told me she didn't become a partner because she could not stay at the office until 9 because of the children.”*

We asked her at the end of the interview if there was anything else she would like to mention, and she did have some things on her mind: *“I think that many things that happen inside the work place, is women's own responsibility. Women in high or middle positions can be very cruel with other women. When women are in their 30's and 40's and have no kids, they try to get more power at work, and they can be cruel. I don't know if it has to do with selfishness. If your work become your life, maybe you feel that that is the way everyone has to live their life. But in my opinion, you don't have to become a man to have success! You can be a mother, you can be you!”*

This made us reflect upon another reason why it might be hard to be a woman in the labor market. It was not only because of the government or the work place, which might not adjust to women having children, but also because of the attitude women have towards each other. This comment was something we would come to find throughout some of the other interviews as well.

6.1.5 Summary of the interviews

Evidently, there were both similarities and differences among these four women. Some of them strongly believed that women needed to raise their voice in the labor market and stand up for their right to equality, while others pointed out that they thought society was going in the wrong direction, and that women should not focus equally much on their career while having small children.

Yulia and Carla were both very concerned with women's right and gender equality in Argentina, and they wanted the same opportunities as men. Beata was very concerned about women's right as well, and stood up for her rights by making her workplace give her more flexible time. Anna was passionate regarding women losing their roots, and being more concerned about having a career than taking care of their children. All of them had very strong opinions of what they considered important. They were all committed to the subjects they emphasized. These four women were in many ways representative for all the 17 women we interviewed.

6.2 Successful women in Argentina: combining their roles

After going deeper into the interviews of these four women, we now move into the general findings on the topic, using all the interviews. We use quotes from all the participants and describe their answers in general, to corroborate our findings.

Initially, before we started the data collection, the interviews were supposed to collect data about gender equality, career women with children and their opportunities to combine family and work obligations. After the interviews, we understood that for the interviewees, it was not only about being a good mother and employee. It was also about being a good friend, wife, colleague, and being active and doing sports, attending various meetings regarding women's rights in Argentina, and doing other volunteer work. It was clear that it was a lot of pressure on women to be successful in many areas. This led us also to focus more on what the interviewees themselves saw as success. We use the rest of this chapter to describe what the participants themselves saw as important when it comes to success and feeling successful.

Their own perception of success

One of the last questions in our interview was regarding how successful the participants felt. On this question, everyone answered that they did feel successful in some ways. What was particularly interesting was to try to figure out what was the definition of success for these women. We questioned whether success meant to have a career, or be married and have a nuclear family. Previous research implies that women of Argentina define their success more based on their family life, rather on their career (Montserrat, Lassaga and D'Annunzio 2006). Most of the participants answered that they felt successful with regard to their career. Maybe the priorities of women have changed, maybe the interviewed women are simply different, or also, one of the reasons for these answers could be that the interviews focused a lot on work and their position at the workplace.

However, family and children are always mentioned in different ways throughout the interviews. The first thing Lilly (39), who worked as a psychologist and had small children said, was that she felt successful, but that she felt guilty for not being able to spend as much time with her children as she wanted to: *"I have a lot of responsibility at work, and I can't spend enough time with my kids. Because of this I cannot say that I feel 100 per cent successful."* Lilly was not the only one pointing out the problem of not having enough time with the children.

Our profile woman, Anna (38), said that she felt successful. She explained that when she was a student she always pictured herself becoming a huge designer and having a big career, but when she got married and started having children, her priorities changed. She also explained that she was afraid that women in Argentina would stop putting their children first, and for her it was clearly family and children, more than her career, that decided whether she felt successful or not.

Frida (38) answered that she was satisfied with how she made things work. The fact that she was able to raise her children, and manage to have a job: *"Maybe I'm not in a very high position, but if I wanted that, I would not have kids."* Furthermore, she expressed that it would be good if the working hours for mothers could be reduced when the children were small: *"As women we can do all of our work in less time! We put a lot of effort in managing all of the tasks."* This particular statement, namely that women can work more efficiently than men, was something quite a few of the interviewees agreed on and talked about.

However, they often explained that it could be hard: *“I am able to work and having children, and I do feel like I’m succeeding in both areas, but there is not much time left to do the things I love”* (Mia, 35).

As mentioned, all the interviewed women answered that yes, they were satisfied and felt successful. Most of them were very career conscious and concerned about their jobs. They had all worked hard to get where they were today, and it was not always easy to get higher positions as a woman (they were all in high positions, even if many point out that they could have been in higher ones).

All of them also answered that they would prefer to work than not, even if they could choose. They wished to be economically independent and not having to rely on someone else, and many said that they would not like to have too much spare time, as it would make them crazy, and that they liked their hectic lifestyle.

However, it is not only being successful at work, or with family and children that matters. They also described lots of other activities and obligations, attached to being with friends and family. For instance, many would take care of their elderly parents in their free time. Moreover, they would go to the gym or do other physical activities, and most of them described a lot of pressure of looking good and successful in all layers of their life.

Our impression is that the interviewees did highly appreciate family life. It was important to them that children were doing well, were healthy and that they had enough time with them. Having enough time with their children was one of the main reasons for them to feel satisfied and successful. No matter how they perceived their success, if career or family life was more important, they all mentioned the importance of spending time with their children. The interviewees who had the longest work hours (up to 12 hours per day), pointed out that they had not worked like this when the children were very small.

However, both work and career were very important to most of these women. We met many women who were engaged in their rights both on a national level, and at their workplace. They wanted to be economically independent, and equal to men at their workplace.

6.3 What are the women balancing?

In this part of the chapter we delve into the different roles and obligations that the interviewed women described that they had to balance in their everyday life.

6.3.1 Children and care responsibility

The interviewed women over 50 years, had on average 2,4 children. For those under 50 years, the average was 1,8. The numbers also show that only one woman under the age of 50 years had more than two children. This underpins the statistics we mention earlier in this thesis showing that women have less children than before. It is also mentioned that this is one of the differences between Argentina and the rest of South America, as the fertility rate decreases a lot faster than in most other South American countries. However, the reduction rate is still less than in many Western countries. Family life and children are still very important. An important factor for our findings is that the youngest woman we interviewed was 35 years old. If we had interviewed younger women, our findings might have been different.

Some of the participants also explained that they did not just have the responsibility of their children, but of their elderly parents as well. Hannah (50) said she used to look after her mother before she passed away: *“I used to look after my mom in the weekends. At this age, you have to look after both parents and kids.”*

All of the interviewees talked warmly about their children, and their relations to them, but as mentioned, they often felt they did not have enough time for them. As described throughout this paper, they all worked hard in order to have a balance that allowed them to be good mothers, and spend the time they saw as necessary with their children. Additionally, it is important to underline that they did not only care for their children, but for other family members and friends that needed their help as well.

6.3.2 Husband / boyfriend (and mother-in-law)

According to some of the research presented in Chapter 2, Argentina is one of the countries with the highest divorce rate in the world. This is to some extent reflected in the interviewees, as a bit less than half of them were divorced. It is especially interesting that so many were divorced, even though the women we interviewed had a quite high average age.

However, our findings also show that just over half of the participants were still married, and that caring for the nuclear family still was very important for them all.

The interviewees who were married, or lived with partner, described their relations a bit differently. Nevertheless, they all described a good relationship with their husbands (if not, they are divorcing). Most of them described it as if they had the biggest responsibility at home regarding domestic work and children. Christina (78) told us: *“Usually the women is in charge of the house, and the one who does the most.”* However, she further explained that this is changing: *“Younger couples, those under the age of 30, have more equalized tasks at home.”* Even if she belongs to an older generation, this lady had not let her husband (or her sons) get away: *“I made a calendar with each day and all the tasks that needed to be done every week. Everyone had to help out, both kids and my husband!”*

Even if many of the interviewees described an unequal division of the tasks in the house and with the children, one of them described the opposite. Oline, a 48 year old woman says: *“My husband fix things, and he cooks a lot better than me.”* She looked at us and smiled as she continued: *“We are a team, we are partners, and he is the man of my life. I have equality.”* However, this was not her first husband.

Another woman, Frida (38), also described that she and her husband divided the domestic work almost equally: *“My husband goes every morning to school with one of the kids, and once a week he picks them up after school. He normally doesn’t do laundry or grocery shopping. That is my tasks, but he helps out some times. Further, he sometimes prepares lunch or other meals, even if this is normally what our maid does.”* She stopped, and thought for a while, before she continued: *“My husband also do the dishes and showers the kids at night. When it comes to taking the kids to activities and so on, we divide it. When the kids are sick, it will be me that goes home, as it is stricter for him when it comes to take time off.”* She also explained that there was a big difference between what he did and what her father used to do: *“Between my husband and my father there is a huge gap! My husband was giving the kids milk and changing diapers. My father: never in his life!”*

Many pointed out that they would have liked to have equality in the division of the tasks at home with their husband, but that this was not the reality for them. One of them, Sofia (67) said: *“I wish it could have been equal dividing, but it was not. I had to get up early to make*

breakfast, wash clothes and get the kids ready. And after school I would have to take them to activities and to the doctor. I had to take them everywhere, it was just me.”

Greta (40) said that *“In the house my husband helps in some things. He takes the dishes, and he iron his clothes. But he never does any general cleaning, so I do more.”* Monica (71) answered the question of whether her husband had helped out in the house during the time the children were small: *“NO! Haha!”* However, she was still very content and blamed this upon that they belong to an older generation. Like many of the others, she described that this was changing a lot among the younger generations, and she had also made sure to teach her sons to be different.

Another one, Lula (55), who at the moment was separated, told us something similar: *“He had an old-school education. His mom was passing the tradition that women have to take care of the children, do the housework and so on. He is in the last generation of this.”* She continued by telling us that she also considered it important to teach her son otherwise: *“I remember that I had a lot of problems with my mother-in-law, because when my son was 4 years old he was always helping me in the house, taking the plates, glasses and everything else from the table to the kitchen and so on.”* She laughed a bit and continued: *“My mother-in-law would say NO, whaaat, he should not be doing this!”*

The interviewees were divided in their views on how to be the best wife or girlfriend, and how much responsibility men should have in the house compared to women. However, they all think that men must participate. All of the interviewees worked hard to try to be the best girlfriend or wife that they could be, as in all of their relations.

6.3.3 Having an education: and supervisors and mentors

All the woman we interviewed had higher education, working at law firms as lawyers, as psychologists, working for different big companies or teaching. Most of them described their education as a big part of their identity and that they were proud of it. Almost all of them said that they felt that their education was relevant for their work, and if it was not relevant for this specific position, it was relevant to get the job.

Some of them were still studying besides working. Some of them were working on their Ph.D., and others were taking different kind of courses that interested them.

Our supervisor from Buenos Aires told us that it was very common in Argentina to have mentors during your study period, guiding you and helping you choose a career. As she pointed out how important this mentor can be, we decided to include a relevant question in the interview. However, only a few of the participants told us that they had ‘mentors’ during their education, and even fewer that it had been important for them. Only one said that she would still meet up with this person from time to time. However, Lilly (39), told us that *“I had a mentor, one of the professors in the university I was studying, which played a huge role on the direction my career has taken.”* Furthermore, she told us that it was important for her to show this lady that she was worthy this help: *“It has been very important to me to show her that her effort has not been in vain, and that I was worth her effort.”*

6.3.4 Work and career life

We started our interviews asking the participants about their work experience over the years, today’s position, the relevance of their education to the job and if there was equality between men and women at the work place. At the end, we asked them if they would choose not to work if they had the possibility and if they thought there were many women in Argentina who would.

On the question about their work experience over the years, it seemed like all of them started working early. Oline (48) says that *“My first job was when I was 14 years old, teaching in a house for small kids. Informal work, but it was my first job. I’ve had a lot of other small, informal jobs. For instance, I worked as a nanny when I was a teenager.”* She thought for a bit, and then continued: *“My first formal job was as an assistant in a university: it was an administrative job.”*

Mia (35) told us that she grew up in a beach town, and that her first work was there: *“I was almost 18. It was as a waiter, during the summer. I did not earn much.”* She further told us that she had taken up a lot of jobs since then, but that she started working in the field she is working in now, right after this (media and communication).

Related to working life are the roles of being good employees, colleagues and sometimes good bosses. Almost all of them described these relations as good. Lula (55) said that when it came to her supervisor at work, they had a good relation: *“Our relationship is good. I can speak up if there is something I am unhappy about. We have a long relationship, and we were friends before we came to work together.”* And Jill (44) said: *“We have a very good relationship, very open, and if I need something I know I get help. I am also able to speak up if there is anything I am unhappy with.”* These two statements are representative examples of most answers.

Not many of the interviewees were bosses or supervisors themselves, but one of the few, Hannah (50), said: *“I am the supervisor here, or I am the boss. I have a good relationship with everybody. I don't have any problems with any personally.”* And she continued: *“As a boss it is very important to have a good relationship to your coworkers.”*

On the question of their relationship to colleagues, they had some different answers, but no one seems to be completely without good relations with their colleagues. Sofia (67) told us about her relationship to the colleagues as good: *“We have problems with politics. We don't always agree, and we have different points of view. Therefore we have to discuss. We have debates and so on, but we always get to some agreements.”* Anna (38), our profile women, told us: *“Very good. I have a good working group. We always help each other, and we are good friends. Sometimes we meet outside work, on birthdays and so on.”*

What seemed to be of most importance for the women, regarding their relationships with colleagues, was that they could discuss and help each other out during the work day, and that they respected each other. A few also considered their colleagues as friends outside of work.

6.4 Summary

What we have come to realize, is that being a successful woman involves many different aspects for these women. Work and career are crucial. They are engaged in their rights and gender equality, but these are not the only things that matter.

Perhaps most importantly they should be successful as mothers, giving their children the right education at home, making sure they got to school, had proper food and so on. Then they had

to be a good wife of girlfriend, a good daughter in law, a good friend, a good colleague and so on. Further came the importance of looking good and giving the impression of being a successful woman to the rest of the world. This involved having a life in which you go to the gym, do running or other sports. Evidently, it is not easy to be a successful woman in Argentina, it contains a lot expectations, and does not include a lot of time relaxing.

7 Work and everyday life

In this chapter, we go into depth of some parts of the women's life. We first consider their employment outside of the household, how they chose to work, why, and what kind of arrangement they had to take care of their children. Furthermore, we go into what their everyday life looked like, and how they spent their spare time.

7.1 Work-life

7.1.1 The choice of working

We asked the interviewees whether they would choose not to work if they had the opportunity and if they thought that many women in Argentina would decide not to work if they had the chance. They answered quite differently to the last question, but most of them thought that women, in general, would choose to work. Our profile woman, Anna (38), responded that she did not believe that her friend's mothers would choose to work, but her friends themselves would all work. She specified that these were all women in a higher social class position who did not really need the money: *"If you can work from home or at an office, you will continue to work because you want to, and like the job."* She further explained that the reason she would choose to work was that she could work from home, and in that way, also spend a lot of time with her children.

Sofia (67) also answered that nowadays she thought most women would choose to work: *"Women want to work, but in my generation, it was different. They would choose not to work and stay at home with the kids if they had the opportunity."* This was something many of the participants agreed upon, and it seemed as if everyone believed that the younger generation would choose to work on a much larger scale than the older ones.

Frida, a 38-year-old woman, told us that she thought they were on a tipping point right now: *"In my kids' class 60% of the moms work and 40% do not work."* She further told us that she thought more women were working now because the husbands participated more with the children and the domestic work: *"Between my husband and my father there is a huge gap! My husband was changing diapers – and my father never did such thing!"* Many of the interviewees agreed upon this statement, but said that nowadays there are many single mothers. This means that they made it work, without help.

There were also some who believed that most women would choose not to work if they could. One of them, Jill (44), said that she would always choose to work, but that many women probably would choose to stay at home: *“Yes, I think so. Having more time with the kids, having more time to travel.”* After thinking for a while, she continued: *“Some women really want to have a career even if they have the money, but yes, I definitely think the majority would stop working if they had the opportunity.”*

As seen, our 36 year old profile woman, Carla, pointed out that even men would choose not to work if they could: *“A lot of women use their kids as an excuse for not doing work they do not like. Maternity is overemphasized, and women do not need to stay home with the kids,”* she told us. She could understand why someone wanted to work less, but not to stay at home for ten years. She argued that it was not a female thing wishing to stop working, but women had the opportunity not to work because they got children, this made the difference.

Silvia (62) talked about her daughter, who had one child and wanted to have another, but because both she and her husband worked full time, they wanted to wait. They wished to progress in other areas, she told us. According to this woman (and this goes well with the statistics), the average age when women have a child has changed: *“Some wait until they are 30 or almost 40 before they have kids. They live first, and have children later. It is not easy to have children and work at the same time in Argentina, and women do not have the primer role in the society. We always have the economic crises in our economy that makes it hard.”*

The same woman argued that it was easier for her than her daughter to combine because there were more jobs back then: *“Right now, there is a change, before if you wanted to move out from your parents, you had to be married, now, after the age of 25 you can move out. Also, there are a lot of divorces and the family structures are in change,”* she told us. Her belief was however that most of the women in Argentina chose to work after they had children, that the companies were getting aware of this and they wanted to keep women working. It is for instance nowadays not unusual to working mothers time to breastfeed during the day.

Many seemed to agree that the role of the woman was in change and that more and more women were choosing to work. However, they were a bit divided on the answers on whether it was becoming easier to choose to work compared to previous generations. One of the arguments for why it was getting harder, was that their mothers now had work of their own,

while in previous generations women were at home and could help their daughters with their children. Hannah (50) told us that: *“My mom was always an important help, she helped me when I just could not go to pick up the kids because I was at work. I would not have been able to work as I did without her help.”*

Oline (48) told us that she was living with her mother during the time her daughter was young. As she got divorced during this time, this was the only reason she could continue studying and get a career: *“But my daughter has to do without this kind of help, as I am working and therefore not able to do it.”*

Even if many of the interviewees described that they had help from their mothers and that they were not able to provide the same type of help for their children, it seemed like most of them agreed that more and more women choose to work. They would all find new ways and engage in their rights for equality at home. Having husbands that contributed at home, and workplaces that allowed them to be flexible, made it a bit easier to work.

7.1.2 Being independent

On the question about their thoughts on women in Argentina in general, and if they would choose not to work if they could, their answers varied a lot. Many of them pointed out that it would be good to have more spare time, travel more and spend more time with the children, but overall, they would not stop working.

Mia (35) said that she did not know the numbers exactly for women choosing to stay at home, but that she and her friends would definitely work: *“I don’t know, but both my friends and me, we would all choose to work. We like to be independent and creative.”* Furthermore, she argued: *“Someone who choose to stay at home will be very much dependent on the husband, we don't like this. It is not just a question of money, but more about being able to survive on your own and not be dependent on anybody else.”* This was her main argument for why it was so important for her to work.

Sofia (67) explained that when she had her second child she stopped working and after the third she started working as a teacher, as it was more flexible. She was out of work for four years and it was hard to return. She had to work her way up to where she is today: *“This is*

not happening again. I am going to work!” She also argued that it was extremely important for women to be able to provide for themselves: *“Here in Argentina, domestic violence is a huge problem. How are you going to get out of a violent relationship if you can’t even provide for yourself?”*

However, even if all the participants seemed to be thinking that it was extremely important to be independent, many of them said that they would also be glad to work less hours. One of the busiest women, Hannah (50), told us that *“I like to work here a lot, but I wish it was less hours. I would like to do more things I like to do, like painting and swimming, and also spend more time with my family.”* Greta (40) answered: *“No! I would like to work. I don't know if I love the work I do here, but I want to be independent and this is very important to me. It is difficult to have small children and work, so it would be nice to work less hours, but I would rather work.”* Another woman, Ana (51), also pointed out that she would work less hours, but still work. She further said: *“Maybe we wish we could stay at home, but when you do, you wish you could work!”*

At last it is important to remember the importance of the social status and the education level of the women we interviewed. If we had the opportunity to interview women with hard physical ground floor work, with low payment, perhaps the answers would differ a lot. Furthermore, if we had interviewed women from even higher levels it would probably have been a different story.

7.1.3 Having a proper work contract: or choosing not to

Through our research, we learned that having a long term, formal work contract is vital for women when they have children, when it comes to receiving social benefits from the state or the work place. Laws and regulations in Argentina give women a lot of rights, but to receive them, a long-term, formal, contract is needed. Under this condition, women can take out maternity leave (3 months paid, and up to 6 months unpaid), and know that they still have a job when it ends. They can also do breastfeeding during the workday the first time after being back.

More than half of the interviewees answered that they had a formal work contract and only a few said that they had no form of proper contract. Even so, most of them did not receive any

social benefits when having children from either their workplace or from the government. This was for instance due to not having a long-term contract, but only one year contract at the time, or that their work contracts were directly with customers, as they worked freelance. Moreover, although the legislations were there, their implementation was not always sufficient. Companies and workplaces seemed to find their ways out of having to give women what they are entitled to by law, and the rights women are supposed to have when having a long-term contract, were often being violated.

Many of the interviewees said that they were satisfied with having contracts for only one year at a time, or with working as a freelancer, as it gave them flexibility, but this did also mean a lot of uncertainty, and no rights of maternity leave or other social benefits.

Lilly (39) said: *“No, actually I don’t have a long-term contract. It is difficult to get a permanent job because you must compete with others, and there are fewer and fewer permanent positions. So I have a provisional contract.”* Our profile woman, Anna (38), who works from home as a freelancer, and only gets paid by her customers for the hour she’s working, claimed: *“Sometimes it can be hard, because I am very dependent on having costumers.”* She further said that it was good to work as a freelancer, because you could stay at home and be flexible, but it was also hard: *“Because you see, you always have to work. If you want to take some holiday, or spend time with your kids without working, you will not get paid. There is no such thing as maternity leave or summer holiday.”*

The main argument of the interviewees who chose to work freelance, or in short time contracts, was the ability to be more flexible and not having to work too many hours per day. Most of them implied that they were very satisfied with this choice, because of their children. Many did however also acknowledge that fact that they were sacrificing rights for social benefits they should have had, and that they were very vulnerable.

7.1.4 Men in the workplace

On the question if there were any men working at the workplace and if they got the same salary as them, many answered that there were more men in higher positions, and more women in lower positions. Regarding salary, they expressed that there was no equality.

In the experience of Sofia (48), men earned more than women: *“In the company I used to work: when I left, they put in a man in my position and he got better paid even though I had more experience and my knowledge was better. What? I want to kill him!”* she said laughing. Another one, Jill (44), expressed that she did believe that if men and women had the same level of education they would have the same opportunities and the same salary: *“Yes, I think so. There is no difference in career opportunities if you have the same education.”* However, she believed that having children was a bigger issue career wise for women than for men, and later she expressed: *“If you want kids it can be difficult. Many companies don't want to hire women of a certain age. Because they know chances are quite high that they will have kids, and therefore need time off.”*

Moreover, many pointed out how men were in higher positions, and that they did not believe that women could handle too much responsibility. They believed that women were the ones that had to take the biggest responsibility for the children and the household, and men the biggest responsibilities at work. Oline (48) said: *“They see us as care persons, not as equal colleagues. I don't think they will ever see us as equal.”*

As already mentioned, a few of the participants also underlined that it was not just men who made it hard for working women, but also other women. Beata (42) described: *“Women in middle positions can be very cruel to each other, this is a work culture many places.”* She further said that when women in their 30s and 40s had no children and got more power: *“You have to keep an eye upon what women do to each other.”* A few also described that women without children looked down upon women at the workplace that had children.

What seemed to be reality for most of the women, was that it was not easy to be a woman in the labor market. Our profile woman, Carla (36), worked with different companies trying to make them equally open for women and men. She wanted to help women realize the bias and achieve higher positions, and her job was providing gender actions plans for the companies. According to her, 53 percent of women had no security system for when they got older and women in Argentina were very vulnerable: *“Argentina is a middle-income country, but there is still a lot to work on when it comes to working inclusion, and a lot to achieve when it comes to economic rights,”* Carla (36) told us. She also told us that it was difficult for young people to have leverage and that it was very hierarchal.

Some of the interviewees answered that men and women had the same salaries in their workplace, but the general rule seems to be otherwise. According to most of them, men did in general have a better salary than women, and they were also much more likely to get the highest positions.

7.1.5 Satisfaction at work

As mentioned, most of the interviewed women answered that they were satisfied with their job. In general they felt that they had good colleagues, and all replied that they had a good relationship with their boss and that their work was appreciated. The most interesting finding in this part of the research was perhaps that most of them did not have a long-term work contract. This leads, as mentioned, to uncertainty, especially when having children. Moreover, as already mentioned, many had to struggle in order to get the benefits they were actually entitled to have, even if they had a long-time contract.

When it comes to equality between women and men, some did not think that there was any difference, only difference in the types of tasks they had, while others thought men had higher positions and higher salaries.

7.1.6 Workhours

Some of the interviewees had very long working hours, and they pointed out the importance of having maids to be able to spend some time with the family. One of the them, Hannah (50), said that she went out at 8 o'clock to look for her driver and went to work, and that she got home again around 8:30 in the night: *“Then, as I have someone to help me at home (a maid), I can spend the time with the kids, my husband and so on. And I don't have to do house work. This is as I work 12 hours, but this is not the regular hour in Argentina,”* she told us. Even if this is not the most normal trend, a few of the participants did have such hours after the children had grown.

It was also usual for the interviewees to have one day a week they worked more than the others: as our profile woman Yulia (53): *“Tuesdays I have to get up at 6 o'clock to travel for about 2 hours to get to work in time, and I stay there until around midday. Then I come here to this job, but before that I go to the company which is near here. Then, at 6 o'clock in the*

afternoon, I go to teach at this university and then I go home around 11 o'clock. But this is a particularly day. The other days I have other schedules and they are not so bad."

After having children, many did not want a job with long working hours. All the participants in this research were professional, successful women at work, and they had somehow been able to combine it with having a family and children. The question is if they were prevented from having an even higher position and higher salary because of their gender.

7.1.7 Flexibility at work

Having flexibility at work was a very important factor for most of the interviewees, to be able to work after having children. They would all choose to work, but many of them pointed out that they were very fortunate to be in positions that allowed them to do so. As pointed out under work contract, this is often taken on the expense of having a long term, formal contract, and thereby on the cost of several social benefits.

Most of the women had arrangements that made them more flexible, and sometimes with less hours, to be able to spend more time with their children. One of the women, Frida (38), told us that she had office hours from 10:15 until 16:30 or 17:00: *"Only 6 hours. No waste of time. I go there, do my work and get out."* Another one, Mia (35), told us that she chose not to work in an office, but as a freelancer, and just a few regular hours as a teacher. She did that in order to be able to spend more time with her son, and she also told us that the university she worked and was flexible: *"Sometimes I will bring him to work, to meetings or teaching"*. If the maid got sick, or something similar happened, she would have the possibility to make arrangements that would solve the problem in the best way. That was one of the reasons she was satisfied with having flexible working hours.

Mia (35) worked mostly as a freelancer to be flexible and to be able to spend time with her son. It made her less secured in a lot of ways. She did not have any regular work contract and she was not a part of any pension system. She was also divorced, and she had to make it on her own. She said: *"The expenses here in Buenos Aires are very high, and you have to work a lot to be able to pay your bills. But I have found a balance between staying home with my son and work. When I go to the kindergarten and see his face, it is so worth it!"* She smiled and said: *"Yesterday they had a sport activity in the kindergarten, and I was the only mom who*

was there. My son and the other kids were very happy to see me. This is something that cannot be paid in money. In an office, you are not able to balance your life like this.” She was ok with giving away her security system, to be a bigger part of the life of her son.

Evidently, being flexible was crucial for the women to be able to combine work and children. Many had to give up rights, and loose social security in order to have it.

7.2 Typical day and spare time

7.2.1 Everyday life

We asked all the interviewed women to tell us about what a typical day looked like, and what they did. What seems to be reality for most of them, was a very hectic everyday life with early mornings and late nights. Many of them got up between 6 and 7 o'clock in the morning, and many started their work around 9 and finished between 4 and 7. During the time they had, they would prepare breakfast, wake them up and help them get ready for school. In various degrees, the husbands or boyfriends were helping with the children, getting them to school and so on. This depended much upon their work schedule, and the schedule of the women, and also a bit on the age group.

On the question of a description of the everyday life, Oline (48), who at the moment had grownup children, started by telling us about her working day: *“I wake up early in the morning, very early, because I like it. And I have to do some things, some work at home. I read the newspaper, prepare the breakfast, clean the dishes. I have frequently meetings in the mornings, or some team work with my clients. Between 9 in the morning and 4-5 in the afternoon I prepare my work and I study.”* Then she tells us about her weekends: *“In the weekends I frequently go to meet with my friends. We go to eat, to the cinema or to the theater.”*

Another interviewee, Mia (35), was divorced and divided custody of her three-year-old son with her ex-husband. Despite of a very hectic life, she seemed to be able to handle it: *“I get up around 7:30, have breakfast and sometimes I meditate before breakfast. Next I water the plants if necessary. Then, if I have my son, I will wake him up and take him to kindergarten. I have him four nights at my place, and then he spends three nights at his father’s place. But he spends a lot of time with his father even when he is sleeping at my place.”* She continues

telling us about her day: *“I go grocery shopping in the morning, and I normally start work around 10. I will have a break for lunch, and sometimes for a yoga class, and I am normally home again around 5-6pm. But sometimes I will have meetings, also in the night.”*

The everyday life of the women is in general very hectic, and it is all about being able to balance all everyday tasks, and still have spare time.

7.2.2 Social life

On the question about how they hang out with their friends. Many told us that they use to hang out with friends that also had children in similar age as their own. They took them to the parks together. When they met the friends without children, they did yoga or other sports activities, had coffee or drinks or ate dinner together. All the women answered yes to having a large network in Buenos Aires. Having friends and social life seemed to be very important to everyone, and something most of them had as a high priority. Lula (55) told us that social life is extremely important to her: *“My friends are just as important to me as my family, after having family and kids we don't have the opportunity to hang out as much as we did when we were younger, but we still meet up, have dinner together and so on. At least once a week I hang out with friends.”*

In addition to that, many were engaging in women's rights in Argentina. Sofia (67), said: *“And with my feminist friends we go out and try to fight for what we believe in, that women should have the same opportunity as men in all areas. Especially when it comes to career and work this is something we have to fight for here in Argentina.”*

7.2.3 Physical activities

Doing physical activity was expressed as very important for most of the women, and almost everyone did some type of sport or activity during the week. Many practiced yoga, some went running or did different group activities, like rugby or hockey. Just one of them, Oline (48), answered no to the question if she did any sport. She pointed out (before even being asked any specific question about physical activities) that she did not any sports, even though she should: *“However, I never go to the gym... Shyyyyy...”* The rest of the women mentioned different types of sports, going to the gym, and / or running.

7.3 Summary

Evidently, all women saw their work and their career as a crucial part of their life and their identity. Even if it was vital for them to work, their free time was also of great importance. Even if they would always choose to work, they would like to have more spare time.

8 Raising children and a society in change

8.1 Importance of having family

It seems that family and having children was of great importance. However, the women arranged to have small children differently, and they disagreed a bit about how important their career was, and how many hours it is acceptable to work while having small children.

8.1.1 Importance of having children

Even if all the women we interviewed wanted to work, they were all also very concerned about being mothers, and most said that this was more important than work. They described that they didn't think it was good to let other women raise their children (for instance the maid, or their mother) – but that they did need a bit of help to make it work.

One of them, Frida (38), described how important it was for her that her mother was at home when she got back from school as a child: *“To me, when I was a kid it would not be the same to tell anybody else, but my mom, about my day. I think it is very important that I don't get home to my kids too late in the afternoon. They need me as a mom, and that requires me being there.”*

Our profile woman of the same age, Anna (38), explained: *“I have a lot of mixed feelings when a woman wants to have a career. I don't really know why women who have small children wants to have a big career. I really have some big problems understanding why someone care more about Mr. Microsoft or Mr. Apple, than their own kid! I don't understand their mind setting.”* She was arguably the woman that was most concerned about not working too long hours, and later in the interview she pointed out that if you have three children, you should take time off from work, for about 10 years all together. While another woman, Greta (40), deviated from this view and said: *“I took the maternity leave of 3 months per child, but apart from that I have worked. Working is very important to me, and I do believe I have been able to balance work and my two kids quite well.”*

All of the women considered it feasible to have children and working at the same time. However, many of them told us that the fact that work and career has become much more normal and important to women in Argentina, is leading them into having children later, and

prioritizing differently than they did before. For instance, this included choosing to have less children. One woman explained it like this: *“Yes, today women live, travel and start a career first, and have kids later. Like me, I had my first kid when I was 35. My mom was 16 when she got married, and she had her first child at 18.”*

Moreover, as shown in the previous chapter, many of the women chose flexibility and being able to spend more time with their children than having a long term, formal work contract that could have secured them and given them the social benefits they are required to have. This is a good example of how they all considered spending time with their children as very important.

8.1.2 Maid as family?

One of the most interesting, and surprising, findings of our research, was the part about the maids. Out of the 17 women we interviewed, all of them had a maid, or they used to have a maid when their children were small. We learned that it was not just among the participants, but that having a maid was very common in Argentina, although there was considerable variation on what kind of help they provided. As seen, our profile woman Carla (36) laughed and told us about her maid: *“She is my most important partner right now, even more important than my husband!”*

Some of the interviewed women had help from the maid every day, some were even living with them while the children were small. They told us that maids helped with housework, cooked and took care of the children while women were at work. Moreover, working was not the only reason for having a maid. Greta (40), said: *“It is very normal to have help at home. I have friends that do not work, and they still have people helping at home.”* Another woman, Jill (44), told us: *“Here it is usual to have a maid who lives with you. I was raised like that. My mom passed away when I was 12, and my father would work all the time. The maid took care of me.”*

One of the most common task for the maids were to bring and pick up the children from school and kindergarten, when the women were still at work. Greta (40), who had two boys of 10 and 12 years, told us that: *“It is dangerous to have kids alone. Therefore I need*

someone with them, therefore I pay someone to pick them up. When I was a child I would go alone, but time has changed.”

Some of the interviewees stated that they did not like this kind of help with the children. They argued that it is not good for the child if they "entrust" the upbringing to another person. The help they received revolved more about housework, but when it came to the childcare they tried to do as much as possible themselves. Furthermore, many pointed out that having a maid living with you is more of a previous generation thing. Nowadays they described that the maids came in the morning and left in the afternoon. As Sofia (67) points out: *“In previous generations it was different, because the woman who was helping would live with you, get up to help the kids in the morning and so on, every day. But today they come a few hours and then go back home. I think this is both because of new laws and regulations, and also because people no longer want anybody living this close. They want their privacy.”*

All the women agreed, as shown, that it was important to not give away the responsibility of the children to someone else. The general rule seemed to be that the maid helped a bit with the children and do a bit (if not all) of the housework.

Most of the women said that it was not expensive to have a maid, but according to some it was very expensive. It was in any case a price they were willing to pay, if they could afford it. Our oldest woman, Christina (78) told us that *“You need a maid, and it is not very expensive. Of course, this depends on your social class, but for me it has always been affordable.”* Lula (55) explained us that it really depended on her job and salary: *“When I was younger I had a low salary and a lot of expenses. At this time I only had a maid in periods. Another period, while the kids were small, I had a time when I worked at the education ministry, and I had a higher salary. So, I paid a maid to do things at home, as I did not have time to do them. At this time, it was not very expensive for me.”*

It is important to consider that the women we interviewed were all highly educated and that they had a much better financial position than most people in Argentina. Evidently, having a maid in many cases was crucial for the women to be able to combine work and children. Sometimes they were a big part of the raising of the children, and most often at least a part of it. However, even if they chose to not have a lot of help with the children from the maid,

having someone to cook and clean provided them with the opportunity to spend more free time with their children.

8.2 The possibility of having children and work at the same time

8.2.1 Law

By law, women with small children were entitled to having two times half an hour for breastfeeding during their workday. This was something some of the women told us about. Those who worked full time in companies or in the government seemed to mostly have had this opportunity, and they seemed to be satisfied with it. However, the women also described that they had to fight for their rights at work. Beata (42), one of the profile women, told us that she was the first one in 90 years to take out the six months of maternity leave (unpaid) and that it was something she had to fight hard for, even if she is entitled to it by law.

Many of the women were very interested in how maternity leave was in Norway, and they thought that the regulations in Norway were a lot better than in Argentina. However, one of the women we interviewed who had a Norwegian husband (our profile woman of 38), and had lived in Norway for some time. She pointed out that she hoped Argentina would not become 'as bad' as Norway: "*Giving away the caring responsibility and letting someone else raise your kids.*" She pointed out too many hours in kindergarten.

On the other hand, Mia (35), told us that staying at home because your children are sick, is not considered as a good reason. She further told us that because you are supposed to stay home one month before the child is born, everyone lies: "*Even the doctor helps women, so that they can work until the baby is born, and in that way have one more month maternity leave after instead.*" After her son was born and she came back from three months of leave, she had to be strict and work 7-8 hours a day. As she pointed out, to get gain respect again. Now she had more flexible time, and she was very satisfied with it. However, to have this flexibility, she, as the others, had to give up on a lot of rights. For instance, she was without any pension system at the moment.

8.2.2 Perception of possibility

On the question on whether it is possible to work while having small children for women in Argentina, the women thought that it depended on your social status and the flexibility of your workplace. Most of them pointed out the lacking flexibility at the workplaces.

Many said that it was quite hard, especially because companies did not want them to combine: *“It is very hard even before you have children to get a job. Everywhere in the job interview they will ask you if you are planning to have children. And this is of course not something they ask men about”* (Cristina (78)). The same woman told us that she thought many women found themselves jobs before having children. After having children, they needed to quit and find more flexible jobs. Cristina (78) further said: *“And there are not enough of this flexible jobs. I believe this is why so many women end up not working, but are doing volunteer work instead.”*

To the same issue, Mia (35) said: *“That is a tough question. It depends. What I have observed is that the women in the higher positions don't have any children, and to be a mom is seen as a bad thing. It is simply not accepted to be a mom there. If you say that you cannot come to work because of your kids, it is not seen as a good reason.”* However, also this woman thought it was possible: *“Just maybe not in the highest positions.”*

Another woman, Sofia (67), said that: *“It has changed a bit. Today there are more jobs that are flexible, more part time work, and work that you can do from home. Also, there are a lot of daycare centers. In the congress, they are currently working on with a law that would make it obligatory to leave your kids in kindergartens from the age of 3. This is a law that will make it easier for women.”* She told us that this law was something women have been pushing through, because it would give them bigger chances, and increase their possibility to have work besides children.

8.2.3 Having flexibility

Their ability to work from home, flexibly or fewer hours at the office, and the possibility to take the children to work if necessary and so on, was very important. Many pointed out how fortunate they were to have this option, but also that not all women had this privilege and therefore they might choose to stop working after having children. Most of the women did

stop working for some time after giving birth, and they also pointed out how fortunate they were to be able to do so (economically).

The first woman we interviewed, Cristina (78), pointed out that in Argentina it is hard to find work that is flexible enough. She continued by confirming what we saw throughout the research, that it is important to remember that this flexibility, often was taken out on the cost of having a regular work contract. Thereby many women would lose the rights of social benefits.

Frida (38) answered the question upon whether it is possible to have employment and small children in Argentina, with saying that it is possible with a lot of effort, and that she was fortunate because she could work 6, instead of 8 hours after having children. She outlined that if you worked somewhere else, you might have to work 8 hours and you needed to have help at home: *“You don't have time for raising the children, so you must delegate the raising to other people. I don't like that.”* She believed it all had to do with the economical position you are in, and how fortunate you are with your workplace. Many of the women agreed upon that.

Even the most flexible women often had a very tight schedule, and in many cases, they had more than one job. Yulia (53), one of the profile women, told us that she taught in three different universities and worked in a company at the same time. This was a reality similar to many. However, during the first years of their children's life, very few worked this much.

In order to be flexible, many outlined the benefit of having family and friends that could help out when the children had to stay at home for whatever reason, and when the maid was sick. Thereby the women could still go to work these days. Having help from family, friends and maids were described as crucial for being flexible as the job itself.

8.2.4 Question of social class

Since we only interviewed women with higher education, they did in general come from the middle class or higher: and most of them were not forced to work to survive during the time they had small children. A few were working from home due to working as freelancers, others due to working for the company of their husband or because they had arrangements

with their bosses that allowed them to do so. Moreover, many stopped working for up to 4 years around the time they had small children. Hannah (50), who had been at home for 4 years when having her three children, described it as quite difficult to come back to work after this time. She worked for one year without payment, and it felt as if she was coming directly from school. She underlined that she would never stop working like that again, but that she was satisfied about the fact she had done it for her children. She also pointed out that if her husband had not earned as much as he did back then, their economic status would have been different, and she would never have had the opportunity to do so.

Almost all pointed out the fact that your social status was very important for how you would choose to have small children and working at the same time. Many of the women said that in the higher social classes, many women chose not to work after getting married and having children. Cristina (78) said that in higher classes, many women never worked, but in the middle class she thought that most worked, but that many stopped working after getting married. However, most agreed upon that this had been changing, and that nowadays more women are working after having children, both in middle and higher class.

8.3 Family arrangements

As seen, the divorce rate in Argentina is very high, and this was also reflected in our sample of women. It is nowadays also very normal to be a single mother, which was also the case for some of the participants. What was clear was that regardless of your family arrangement, having a maid was crucial for most of these women.

8.3.1 Husband / boyfriend participating at home?

When we asked the women if their husbands helped with the domestic work and with taking care of the children, as many as 9 out of 17 women said yes, only 4 answered no and the rest answered yes and no. This is a normative question, and what it mean for the women can therefore vary. For some, this could imply that the husband participated with the practical work at home and that the economic situation was dependent on him. With this question, we tried to figure out if the husband participated in the specific domestic work, such as doing laundry, making dinner and taking care of the children. For instance, if they would change diapers, or take care of the children when they were crying during the night. For this reason, we always asked the women to elaborate and tell us more about what they did while the

children were small. When it came to the man's contribution in the home, it is also relevant to look at the earlier research showing that Argentina has a culture of male dominance. We learned that almost all the women described doing more than the men at home, and they also took more responsibility for the children. Their view upon what it meant for a man to help out enough at home divided them.

All the married women answered that their husband had been working full time (or studying) the whole time, and many pointed out that this put more responsibility on them when it came to taking care of the children. This was due to their husbands longer working hours, and fewer possibilities of taking time off if the children were sick and so on. They did however, answer a bit differently. Some said that there would be no help from the husband: *“No division, he had an old-school education, and he did not do anything in the house”* (Lula (55) divorced). While others claimed to have more or less equality in the house, Beata (42) stated: *“It is all about equality, as I work just as much as him, we have to divide the tasks.”*

Many mentioned that in Argentina there were many good laws, but in practice there were no social equality. Most of the women described that they were the ones to stay at home if their children got sick and so on (not the husband), but very few seemed to have an arrangement at work which allowed them to go home and get paid. Some told us that they would take out their yearly week of holiday when the children got sick, and others tried to bring them to work. A few also had the possibility to stay at home with their work, but they needed to work if they wanted to get paid. What was typical in any case, was that neither of these arrangements would apply for men. Most of the women underlined that men would not be able to go home to care for the children when needed, even if they wanted to.

Many interviewees stated that they were not completely satisfied with the distribution of roles in the home, especially when it came to taking care of the children. One of the main reasons for this was that the husband worked long hours, and they often went to work early and did not come home before 8 or 9, when the children were already asleep.

8.3.2 Help with children from other family members

Before entering Argentina, we thought that many women got help from their own mothers and their mothers-in-law when having small children. We learned that quite many of the

respondents mothers had employments of their own during the time the interviewees had small children, so this was less frequent than we thought it would be. However, 10 out of 17 women did answer yes on the question if they had help from their mother, and 7 out of 17 had help from other family members during the period they had small children. Silvia (62), one of those who got divorced early, told us that she was living with her mother until her daughter was 18, and that this made it possible for her to have a career as well. As she had a very low salary, it would not have been possible otherwise. The same woman told us that her daughter went to a private kindergarten, but it was free as she had a scholarship. After this she was one of the few that sent her child to public school. Today the interviewee was a very successful woman in a high position. For those who had help from their family, it had been very important in order to build a career at the same time.

8.3.3 Help from maid

As mentioned several times, maids were a crucial help to most of the women. Some had a maid every day for many hours, and others just a few hours every week: but they all paid someone to help. Moreover, everyone told us that they had maids when growing up, and many had even had a maid that lived with them in their childhood. This is one of the facts they described as changing. Nowadays it was not very common that the maid lived at home with them, it was more usual to come in, work regular hours and then go home.

8.3.4 Kindergarten and daycare

Most of the women chose to have their children in private daycare and kindergarten, but there were slightly different views upon whether this was expensive or not. Our oldest woman, Cristina (78), said that she had her children in a private nursery school from the age of 2 years old, and that it was not expensive. Some of the women agreed upon that it was cheap, but some also of them thought that it was too expensive, and that they were fortunate to afford it. Silvia (67) had a scholarship during the time her daughter was young, and could therefore send her to day care for free. She was the only one who had this kind of support.

8.3.5 Support from state and workplace

As mentioned, all women in Argentina are by law entitled to 3 months of paid maternity leave: 45 days before and 45 days after birth. Even so, we learned that this was not the case

for many women: as many of the women did not have a regular long term contract in their workplace.

On the question asked regarding whether they received any support from the government for their children, almost all answered no. Many pointed out that they did not receive any money, as that is only for those from a lower class with less money, and that it is a very low amount. Frida (38) told us that she used to get a bit of support for a while, but now she is earning too much money to receive any financial support from the government.

Most of the women did not receive any type of support from either the government or from their workplace, but two of the women (both working in the government) mentioned that their children had daycare at the workplace when they were young. This was provided by their workplace and was a free service.

Furthermore, the public school in Argentina is for free, but almost none of the women chose to send their children to public school. Instead they paid to send them to different types of private schools (mostly catholic schools), arguing that the public school was of bad quality, poor organization and teachers with less experience than those in the private schools. This matches the trend in Argentina that most middle-class families pay the extra money to let their children go to private school. The only public school most of the women pointed out as good, was the public university. The problem with this was the very high level, and that it was very difficult to get into a study there. Therefore, most ended up paying also for a university degree.

8.4 Changing towards a better reality for women?

8.4.1 Better – but not good enough

As mentioned, many of the women said that they wished they could answer that it was equality between women and men in the house, but that it was not. Still women are doing more than men, but most agreed upon that men nowadays do more than in previous generations. A big concern for many was that they did not think their husband spent enough time with their children. Our profile woman, Carla (36), said that they used to fight a lot about this, but as he was earning 3 times more than her, she had accepted and they were not

fighting about it anymore. However, she was still not satisfied about it, because her son was not seeing his father enough.

It seems like most of the women agreed that it had been changing in the right direction, but also some thought it was more challenging to work and have small children nowadays, than for previous generations. This was for instance due to that the mothers of the women themselves were not working and were able to help taking care of their grandchildren, while nowadays almost all grandmothers worked themselves. Moreover, women with a low salary might not find an affordable maid to help with the children. Some of the women also pointed out that the fact that women now are supposed to have a career beside the family obligations puts them in a constant feeling of guilt. Silvia (62) said, as many others, that: *“The most difficult thing was to leave my child and not see her during the day”*, and that she felt guilty. She further said that it is the same for all women in her generation. They have to work, and often they have to choose between children and high careers.

8.4.2 Generation change

When it comes to women working and raising children, we were interested in finding out if there are any distinctions between generations. Therefore, we asked the women if their mother and father had been working. Then we asked them about the division of domestic work in the home and if they thought that this had been changing.

8.4.3 Change

When we asked the question whether there has been any change through the generations, almost all the women expressed that it was a change. The first thing they said was that there were more women working nowadays than before. Women these days are taking education and they are no longer at home with their children for too long. Another change they pointed out, was the man's role in the home. Many said that men participated a lot more with household chores and raising children than previously. This was particularly interesting because our interviewees had such different ages. We got the impression that the younger women expected that the man participated at home, either with housework or child care, while some of those who were a little older and had adult children, told us that the man rarely helped.

8.4.4 Women with more possibilities nowadays

Sofia, a 67 year old woman, thought there had been a lot of changes over the last generation: *“My grandfather would not allow my mum to study because they were living in a city where there were no university, so she would have to travel. My mum took care of us, 8 kids. She told us: you have to study, you have to study!”* This woman also told us that her mother did get help from a lady, and that this also has changed. Previously women who helped out lived with the family, got up and helped the children in the morning and so on every day, as nowadays they only came for a few hours.

8.4.5 Working parents

We wanted to find out how many of the women had parents working during their upbringing. All the women, except one, whose father passed away when she was very young, had fathers who had been working full time. Six women responded that their mother had not been working at all. Three of the participants responded that their mothers had been working before getting marriage and having children, often part time. Out of the 17 interviewees, eight women responded that their mother had been working all the time. Although it should be mentioned that it often was part time working, work from home, or working for their husband. It was anyhow interesting that surprisingly many replied that their mother had been employed. Lilly (39) explained that her mother started working and took education when Lilly was around 12 years old. Many responded that it was typical to spend more years at home with the children before going back to work.

According to Lilly (39) they had a maid when she was small, but it was the mother’s main responsibility to take care of the children. Her father contributed with the childrens homework when he had time. She argued that it was during the last generation this started to change, and fathers started taking more care of the children. One of the women, Frida (38), claimed that when it comes to grandmothers taking care of the children, this has changed over generations: *“More women at my mums age are working now. There are a lot of new solutions now, like places you can leave your kid, like a day care.”*

Furthermore, Frida (38), said that most of the women nowadays have finished school in contrast to her mother’s generation. That generation’s aim was to find a husband, get married and have children. Her generation had less children and continued working. Oline (48) said

that one of the greatest changes is that there are washing machines, a lot of products to help clean, it is possible to get food delivered, and the internet, which has made it easier for mothers to make time for work. Frida (38) (as others) claimed that there is a huge gap between her father and her husband: *“My husband helps out a lot more, helping out giving milk, changing diapers etc. My father, never in the life!”*

8.4.6 Teaching their own children

Some of the women told us that they taught their own sons to help out in the house. One woman, Ane (51), said that this was one of the issues between her and her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law always protested and asked why when her son helped her cleaning the table after dinner and so on. Then men are according to most of the women gradually coming in and doing more, both in the house, and also helping with the children. However, it seems like it was still a bit shameful for men to take time off work to be with the children, and if the children got sick or hurt themselves in school or in daycare it was almost certain that they would call the mother, and not the father, to pick up the child. As Lula (55) pointed out: *“They don't call men for these matters.”* This is another important reason why women need a flexible job to combine it with family life.

8.5 Summary

Raising children was a big, if not the biggest, concern for all the women we interviewed. They all devoted a lot of time and effort, and they all needed some help to make it when combining having small children and work. They had different kind of assistance, but maids and mothers were often very important. When it comes to generation change, some argued that it is becoming more difficult to raise children while working, while most say that it is getting easier. Men are gradually starting to contribute at home, and spending more time with their children. Rights and regulations for pregnant and women with children are improving. However, all seem to agree upon that there is still a long way to go before it becomes easy for women in Buenos Aires to have a good work-life balance.

9 Analyzing the findings

In this chapter, we use the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 4, to interpret our findings from Chapters 6, 7 and 8. We start by using the structuration theory, and the table we presented in Chapter 4 to analyze the data before we continue with the capability approach, looking specifically at choices, conversion factors and adaptive preferences in the women's life.

9.1 Structuration theory

We believe that structuration theory allows us to structure our findings in a good way. In the following, we use the table of the theoretical framework of structuration theory from Chapter 4 and fill in our findings under each of the headlines.

9.1.1 External structures

As described in Chapter 4, external structures are the limitations and the possibilities for action and show how the environment either strengthens or weakens a person's opportunities. In this research, it implies the resources that are available to professional women with children. Within this lie both national and international laws and regulations, norms in society and the different resources women have access to.

Even if they graduate in higher numbers than men from the university and career women in Latin-America are in the ten highest paid professions in the region, they are paid less, and are underrepresented. Numbers from 2007 reveal that women in positions as directors and chief executives earn an average of 333 US dollars per month, compared to men who on average get paid 626 US dollars (Ñopo 2012). This implies a norm in which less payment of women is normal. Even if things might have changed since 2007, and Argentina, in general, has more gender equality than many other countries in Latin-America, there is still a big difference.

Furthermore, the human rights organization International Labor Right Forum writes that women are more likely to be employed in low-wage or unpaid work and that they are subject to dismissal for getting married or having children. They also describe that women have an increased risk of experiencing sexual violence, harassment and forced pregnancy tests (International Labor Right Forum). Throughout our research, we learned that it could be

difficult to be a woman applying for work, especially at certain ages. The interviewees said that if employers saw a significant probability of them having children soon, this could be a reason for not hiring them. They often got questions at job interviews about whether and when they planned to have children.

Men in Argentina are entitled only to two days of paternity leave, and out of the 17 women we interviewed, none of them reported that the fathers of their children had used this right. The norm in the Argentinian society nowadays, as described by the interviewees, is that there is almost no acceptance for fathers to stay at home with their children, neither taking out paternity leave or for other reasons. The interviewees reported that almost without exceptions they were the ones that stayed home when needed.

On the other hand, Argentina has a history of women in high positions, such as presidents. By law, the Congress needs to have at least 40 percent women, and the maternity leave protections are a lot better than in many other Latin-American countries. The country has during the last decades implemented many rules and regulations that secure women's participation in the political sphere as well as the work sphere. However, the interviewees described that even if the laws are there, there are still more men in the highest positions, and women are on average paid less.

Today women in Argentina are entitled to have a paid maternity leave of 3 months, 45 days before and 45 days after birth. Furthermore, women can choose to take out 3 to 6 months of unpaid leave, and their workplace must keep their positions open during this time. There is also a law granting women the right to breaks for breastfeeding during the time they have young children. All rights are however dependent upon having a formal, long time contract.

It is nowadays more normal than in earlier generations to have children in kindergarten from a young age, and there are more nurseries to choose from. Some of the women who were working in the Congress told us that the workplace provided kindergartens for the employees, and free of charge. Some of the same women also said that their supervisor had hired a person who looked after their child during working hours.

In the higher classes of the Argentinian society, having a maid has been normal for decades. All the interviewees told us that they had a person to help at home, only in different degrees.

The women working as maids helped with cleaning the house, cooking, looking after the children, taking them to kindergarten or school, and picking them up after.

Another widespread support for these working mothers were their mothers and mothers-in-law. However, this was described as a less common strategy nowadays, as the older women were now working themselves, and therefore lacked time to help. It is anyhow still normal to give and receive help from both friends and family. Everyone reported that they had an extensive social network in Buenos Aires, and this was often mentioned as a great help to combine children with work.

All the interviewees came from middle class and higher, and they all had an economic possibility to take unpaid maternity leave, work fewer hours, or have the children in kindergartens. This was often due to having a husband with a high income that could provide for both, or receiving help from their parents.

Many laws and regulations promote women's participation in the labor market of Argentina. However, the interviewees said they often did not take advantage of this but rather chose to stay flexible. Formal work contracts in most cases required women to work full time except the maternity leave, and this was something many would give up for some time. To be able to combine children and family life with employment, many of the interviewees chose to work freelance, part time or fewer hours with short time contracts (often six months or one year at the time).

It was clear that most workplaces did not accept women in high positions, especially while having small children. They would not support them much in combining this. Women in such positions were very much dependent on having help (mothers, mothers-in-laws or their maid) for combining family life and work the first years. Furthermore, a high position at work could result in missing what they considered as valuable time with their children.

9.1.2 Internal Structures

The internal structure does, as shown earlier, refer to the actors more long-term or permanent dispositions, their world view, and more situated and time depended interpretations and ways of thinking and responding.

Everyone we interviewed had been able to combine small children and paid work, either at the time or in the past. All answered that it was feasible to combine the two, but they did differ in the view of how easy or hard it was. When it came to caring responsibilities, many of the interviewees did not only look after their children but also helped their parents as they grew older. Furthermore, they all described a large network of friends in Buenos Aires, which was important both in terms of receiving and giving help when needed.

None of the interviewees described it as impossible to combine all their obligations, but they did report a very hectic life, with little spare time. Most of them, as already described, chose flexibility over security system during the years the children were small. They were often much dependent on financial support from either their husband or their parents, both in present time and in the future, as for instance, their pension rights would become very limited. In general, this was a reality they had accepted, but many expressed a lot of anger, and it was something they wanted to change.

Those who had a long-term, formal contract when the children were young, described that their workplaces in various degrees accepted them taking time off or working from home when the children were sick. They told us that they were often forced to take out their holiday or find other ways around to be able to take care of sick children. They considered this especially unfair, as the husband did not have any flexibility, leaving all the responsibility to them. In the view of many, this was one of the biggest disadvantages for women trying to build a career. They believed that many workplaces hesitated to have women in the highest positions, precisely due to this fact.

The married interviewees and those living with their boyfriends described different degrees of contribution from the man in the house and with the children. When it came to dividing the tasks, it was almost never an equal division. The younger generations had, according to everyone, a more equal division in the home and with the children. However, it was clear that an entirely equal division almost never occurred. It was described as due to that Argentina is known for having a culture of male dominance, and because men thought the domestic work and taking care of the children was the responsibility of women. Another reason was that it was almost impossible for men, in many cases even very shameful, to request flexibilities at work for spending time with the children.

Even if the interviewees considered it very unfair and unhealthy for the children to spend such small amounts of time with their fathers, they accepted it due to the fact that men usually earned more. They explained that if they were to switch, they would have a very different financial situation. This was considered unfair, but accepted, and many would rather focus on the younger generations and more equality for them.

Most women described that they were satisfied with how men in gradually bigger scale were taking responsibilities at home and with the children. They also saw it as important to teach their sons to help at home from an early age. Nevertheless, they all agreed upon that there was still a long way to go towards equality between the genders. All of them saw it as the aim to reach equality, but some outlined that being a mother does require sacrifices. They argued that women were better at taking most of the responsibility for the children. Furthermore, spending time with their children was of high priority for the women, and they always put the children first. It might be difficult for them to give away their responsibility to men.

Many accepted that they had to take more accountability in the house and for the children. The general view was that there was no way to work full time the first months after birth, at least not if they could not bring their children to work. However, as men in most cases had no possibility of staying at home during this time, one could argue that women were forced to stay at home.

Almost all the interviewees pointed out how unfair the differences in wage between men and women were. They could in various degrees understand and defend that men more often got the highest positions, but they could not accept that men in the same positions earned more. It was one of the injustices none of them under any circumstances accepted.

Some also mentioned that it was not just men who made it hard for working women, but also other women. A few told us that women without children looked down upon the women having children at their workplaces.

All the women we interviewed had the feeling of being successful in some ways, and in general, they were satisfied to be able to combine having children and a career. They all knew that it was not easy to be a woman in the higher positions, and many mentioned that they were proud to have stood up for their right and demanded more flexibility, or fewer

hours. They expressed that they wanted to feel valuable enough for the workplace to keep them, even if they worked less time and had children.

9.1.3 Practices

Practices refer to the daily actions of the agent in the local context or communities of practice. Practices would be, as described in the table in Chapter 4, gaps in disposal income and career opportunities between genders. It could be the use and take-up of policy measures to promote gender equality and encourage labor market participation, and use of strategies to combine family obligations with paid work. Furthermore, it would be the perception of the interviewees on availability, adequacy, and relevant policies to promote labor market participation and gender equality, and their experiences and reactions to efforts to combine paid work and family obligations.

Working women is not something new, but during the last decades, women have gradually been taking up employment on a bigger scale. As more women choose to work, the employers will have to facilitate them when having children, at the workplace. Rules and regulations of maternity leave in Argentina are gradually making it easier for women to choose to have children and a career, even if it is a big difference between genders.

By law, women are entitled to the same rights as men in the labor market of Argentina. Moreover, the law provides protection against discrimination and loss of job due to having children. It is still according to previous research a long way to go (both in Argentina and in the rest of the world) before women have the same opportunities as men. Our findings indicate the same. Most of the interviewees answer that males are usually paid more than females and that it is also a lot easier to get the higher positions as a man.

In present Argentina, it is becoming more common to have children in kindergarten from an early age, and this does promote women to choose to work. All women in this research had their children in kindergarten, only at different hours and starting at various ages.

In the middle or upper class, it has for a long time been normal to have a maid in Argentina. When it is affordable, most of the women from higher social classes can rely on this help. All the women we interviewed had maids and relied on this help to a different extent. In addition

to that, some of the interviewees working in the Congress told how they were working to implement a law which requires children to start kindergarten when they are at the age of three. This law was made by women, for women, to make it easier to work after having children.

All the women we interviewed were very clear about the fact that social position was crucial for the possibility to combine employment and family life in a right way. Since we only interviewed women with higher education, all of them came from higher social positions, and they were rarely forced to work to survive during the time they had small children. A few worked from home due to working as freelancers, others due to working for the company of their husband or because they made arrangements with their bosses that allowed them to do so.

It was not uncommon for the women we interviewed to stop working for more than one year when they had small children. One told us that she had been at home for four years when having her three children, and both she and others described that it was quite difficult to come back to work after this time. They would work for some time without payment, or they would have to start in lower positions, and they felt the need to "relearn" their skills.

As seen, on an average, males earn more than females, and they are more likely to get the higher positions. As women are expected to, and more likely due to laws and regulations to take the biggest responsibility for the children, this could be seen as a significant disadvantage for women seeking a career.

The maternity leave laws have gradually improved, and even if none of the interviewees thought that they were good enough, in general, the biggest problem would not be the leave itself, but rather that many women were not entitled to it. This was normally due to not having a long term, formal work contract. In many cases, it was also due to one of the most common strategies to combine labor and children. Having flexible workhours, working freelance, part-time or accepting short time contracts are examples of this.

Another significant finding was that since work and career have become much more normal and important to women in Argentina, this led them to have children later and prioritize

differently than before. Moreover, they chose to have fewer children than in earlier times, as this allowed them to work more.

All of the women in this research described that they saw it as possible to combine family life with work, and they all managed it in different ways. Most of them were very passionate about both their work, and their children, and giving up neither ones was never an option.

All the interviewees who were entitled to have paid maternity leave did take the opportunity, and some also took up to six months of unpaid leave. They would stand up for their rights to have it. However, many of them pointed out their social position, and that their economic situation allowed them to use the right of unpaid leave. They also saw the regulation of maternity leave, only in case of a formal work contract, as not very useful. Most of these women were able to choose to give up many benefits and work flexible, but they did underline how they became dependent on other people. They saw it as very unfair that it was so hard to be entirely independent as a woman.

Apart from choosing a flexible work schedule, the most common help for combining seemed to be to employ a maid and to have a mother or a mother-in-law that could help out. Some of the interviewees lived with their mothers in periods (especially if they were single), and often their mother stepped in when for instance the children were sick. Everyone showed gratitude for having this opportunity for help, and many pointed out that it was crucial for being able to combine.

The women working as maids were also often described as their most valuable partner during the time their children were small. Their husbands or boyfriends were in most cases not able to participate a lot, or if the women were living alone, they relied on the support they received from their maid.

Furthermore, many described the importance of working for the rights of the maids: as they were women helping women, and until recently they were without any social rights at all. Nowadays most housekeepers work on proper, formal contracts, and their employers have to pay for their insurances. The women we interviewed were all content with paying this, and they all found it crucial that maids got these rights.

9.1.4 Outcomes

Within the outcomes lies a reproduction and transformation of the social life, including the shaping, or reshaping, of external and internal structures, and the conditions for action. It involves the stabilities or changes in policies promoting gender equality, gaps in disposal income, the prevalence of discrimination, structures of maternity leave and equality in paid / unpaid work, looking at a higher level, and in the perception of women.

We do find a significant change over time and within the different age groups regarding women's possibilities to combine family life with work. The maternity leave has been gradually improved, and many of the women we spoke to were engaged in making them even better. Furthermore, as society is changing, nowadays a family often relies on having two incomes. This forces both women and workplaces to find ways to combine childcare and employment. However, all the interviewees outlined the importance of sustaining the political pressure, as they were still far from where they wanted to be.

Regarding equal payment, Argentina does to some extent have a much higher degree of equality than other Latin-American countries (Angeloinfo). Further, it does not seem to be the payment for equal work that makes the most difference, but that men, in general, have higher positions. The interviewees explained that this was in many cases due to having children. As having children requires time off work for women, workplaces prefer men in the higher positions. Some also described a work culture where men viewed women as unable to have top positions.

As mentioned, many of the interviewees said that they wished equality between women and men in their house was a reality, but it was not. Still, women do more than men. Nevertheless, most agreed upon that men nowadays participate more than in previous generations. Still, a big concern for many was that they did not think their husband spent enough time with their children.

We also learned that during the last decade there had been female leaders, and women were gradually seen as able to have such top positions. However, as the interviewees often pointed out, women in the highest positions would often not have children, or they would have to take a break from this responsibility during the time they had small children. After this, they

had to work their way up again. They had to work hard to get back up, and they all said that there would be no other reason than children, for them to stop working.

Many of the interviewees said that in the higher social classes, many women choose not to work after getting married and having children. However, most agreed upon that this is changing in the newer generations and that more women are working after having children, both in middle and higher class.

All the women we interviewed confirmed there had been a change over the generations. The first they said was that more women work nowadays than before. Women get education (even on a bigger scale than men) and most do no longer choose to stay at home with their children longer than necessary. Another change they pointed out, was the man's role in the home. Many said that men participated a lot more in household chores and raising children than previously. We found this especially interesting because our interviewees were from different generations. Specifically, the younger women expected men to participate at home, both with housework or child care, while some of those who were older and had adult children, told us that men never helped.

What was clear, was that it was becoming more standard for women to work, and even if men gradually were participating at home, this was evolving much slower. As fathers are still only entitled to two days of paternity leave, and their workplaces did not facilitate them in taking time off or being flexible, they were not able to take as much responsibility as women even if they wanted to. On the other hand, it was clear that most workplaces did not facilitate much for women either, even if they were expected to take the responsibility for the children.

Even if the norm in society is that mothers need to stay at home with the children, this is not reflected in the general regulations at the workplace. Staying at home with sick children was rarely fully accepted at the workplaces of the interviewees. They reported that they had to bring the child to work when this was possible, bring their work home, or others simply had to use their week of holiday for the year. Furthermore, this was one of the factors that pushed women into taking informal work, short time contracts or part-time employment during the time the children were young. This again leads women into having to work hard to get back into formal work.

One could argue that the demand for women to work, was much higher than the support for them to be able to combine it with children. Moreover, women wanted to work, but the wish to spend enough time with their children was still higher, and they never let work come in the way. Arguable the regulations in Argentina today would facilitate quite well if women were on formal long time contracts. However, this required them to leave the children to others (maids, daycare, their mothers) long hours from an early age. In most cases, women did not want this, so they rather took out the six months of unpaid leave, and chose flexible jobs without benefits. This made them dependent upon others, and on not getting sick or needing to take time off work for other reasons.

When we asked whether the parents of the interviewees had been working, more or less all had fathers that had been working full time. It was interesting to learn that surprisingly many replied that their mother had employment as well. The biggest difference was that today's women in a large scale (even if many did not) had formal work. Their mothers mostly worked from home with their own small businesses or helped their husbands with his work, which in no way provided any rights of benefits from the government.

Looking at the different age groups, we saw that women were gradually becoming more independent and able to combine better. We did not find any major differences within the life of the women themselves, but rather that the younger ones found new ways, and the laws were getting better. However, the norm seemed to be that it is still acceptable to be dependent on others for a woman. They could very rarely be a hundred percent independent, and in many ways, they were dependent on their husband, their parents or others.

9.2 The capability approach: adaptive preferences and conversion factors

While we used structuration theory as an overarching framework, the capability approach is a supplementary theory when analyzing our findings. This approach provides the opportunity to go further into the capability set and functions of the 17 women. It is a framework useful when considering their actual choices and resources, and looking at the adaptive preferences the interviewees might have. Additionally, the capability approach is suitable to discussing the women's conversion factors, and in what ways they can benefit from the capability inputs pointed out, from personal, social and environmental characteristics.

The women we interviewed all had higher education and jobs with a relatively good income. Several had husbands or boyfriends with full-time employment and even better income, and all described having an extensive network around them. In other words, these are resourceful women. It is interesting to examine whether the choices the women made, to stay home with the children, work less, or work full time, depends on the structure given by their community or other factors. Something that seemed to them as a choice they had made, could have been different if for instance it was socially accepted or laws had been different. One example of this is the reaction one of the interviewees had when we told her about the regulations of maternity leave in Norway. This was after she had responded being satisfied with the way it had been for her. She could not believe what we described and said that it sounded too good to be true.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Sen (1993) views a capability as a person's opportunity, ability, inner strength or real freedom or potential, to achieve certain conditions or practice certain activities, for example, the chance to realize an outcome or get a result. A person's capability to live a good life is concerning the set of valuable 'beings and doings' like having a good health. Sen (1992) would look at structures in society, politics, culture, and family, and then examine the possibilities for people to achieve their goals (actually achieve). The fundamental concepts are functionality and capacity. If society gives people these opportunities, they have real freedom (effective freedom). Besides, people must have reasonable grounds for their values (reason for value).

This means that to make a judgment whether people in a society really have the opportunities to freely choose their lives, it is not sufficient to ask whether one individual feels free. To do that, and stop there, is what Sen (1992) accuses the utilitarianism to do, as we saw in Chapter 4.

9.2.1 The women's choice and agency

For Sen (2005), choice and agency are key concepts: The different options you have in your life, and the possibility to make use of these choices. In the following, we examine the opportunities available to the participants of this research when it comes to work-life balance. Furthermore, we also look at how they take advantage of the choices available and if they are availing themselves of the existing laws and regulations.

The capabilities framework poses a challenge to theories of preference and choice that do not recognize that one's choices/ freedoms are bounded by what we perceive as possible. We ask if quitting their jobs or having more flexible hours to be able to stay more at home, is a choice of their volition or if it could be sprung out from the norms of society, from tradition or influence from friends and family. The interviewees might feel as if the choice they make is their personal decision, while they might have chosen differently if allowed (e.g., if it was normal in Argentina for women to work full time at the same time).

People need to have the freedom (capabilities) to live the life they want to, to do what they want to do and be the persons they want to be. When they have these liberties, they can choose to act on them in line with their ideas of the life they want to live. Our findings show that all the interviewees answered they are satisfied and have the feeling of living a good life. However, as expected, the answers on what it is that gives them happiness varies. Some of them responded that it is because they have achieved a career they are proud of, others replied that it is because the children are healthy and doing well, and most indicated something in-between this. It is clear that both career and family were important to the women. The question is if they can choose how to combine them, or if society 'forces' women to do so in a certain way.

As mentioned, all the participants did feel satisfied with their life situation in some way. The women being able to combine work and family life did not rely on the Argentinian society, and the facilities it offered them. We rather found that as of now, the Argentinian society including laws and regulation tended to facilitate more for women to stay home with the children and for men to be the breadwinners. Significant inequalities between the genders in the labor market still exist. Thereby we asked the question if the interviewees choosing to stay at home in periods, and having flexibility would have been the same if the society had not 'required' it. Further, it should be considered that these women to a large extent had the luxury to choose. Many of them could also have decided to stay at home if they wanted.

9.2.2 The unpaid work - a choice or not?

Some of the participants in our research expressed being satisfied staying home with the children and doing housework to a larger extent than their husbands. However, we found that

choosing flexible hours, having short terms contracts, or being a freelancer, could be negative regarding the women's capabilities, as it often undermined their social rights. They often needed to make a choice between having flexibility, more time with the children and no social rights, taking maternity leave without pay, or having to work 8 hour days only one month after birth.

We further question whether this is a choice they should have to make. In any case, their decision in some ways always left them dependent on others. By choosing flexibility, they became more dependent on their husband, parents or other economic support, because they were earning less and they were without rights of any support from the state. If they chose to work 8 hours already after one month, they would in most cases be very much relying on having a lot of help at home. They would need their mothers or a maid.

As seen in Chapter 3, Lewis and Giullari (2005) points out that care must be conceptualized as a 'legitimate' choice, and as a necessary human activity, which in turn provides the basis for arguing that it must be shared between men and women. Nevertheless, 'forcing' men to share care work raises an issue of the moral qualities, that have been identified as characterizing genuine care. They further argue that positive incentives for men to care must be built into the kinds of measures that are required to underpin the 'real' choice to care: time to care, cash for care, the regulation of work hours and care services. They also point out that there are some considerable difficulties with the task of making this kind of social policies that promote and give real choices to men and women about both paid and unpaid work. However, it is impossible to choose not to care, or not to work, from the point of view of human welfare.

Care must be conceptualized both as a necessary central human activity and as a 'legitimate' opportunity or choice, which is what the capability approach is giving us. This further gives us a base for arguing that care work must be shared between women and men, and it is necessary if women's agency freedom is to be equal to men's (Lewis and Giullari 2005). Our findings show that this is not yet the case, and despite that men participate more now than before. It is still women who take the greater responsibilities at home, and men who work full time and have the highest income. However, this makes it hard to know whether the women wish to give away any of this responsibility and if the men wish to participate more. It is in

any case clear that for care to become a 'legitimate' choice for the interviewees, there is still a long way.

As the interviewees described, men are gradually in larger scale choosing (or pushed?) to participate at home and spend time with the children. They described this as something happening because women are driving it, but also as the society on a larger scale is expecting it. Nevertheless, it is still shameful for men to choose their children over work: their bosses and their colleagues would make fun of them, and not allow it. This outlines the importance of culture concerning capability. No one wants to be made fun of, and men might choose not to take more responsibility simply because of shame. On the other hand, women might want to stay at home and take more responsibility for their children, as it is expected of them, and as people would look down at them for not doing so.

The capability approach insists that one needs to put individuals in the position where they have all possibilities, to be able to make genuine choices. The approach has potential to justify policies that promote the sharing of care between men and women. Thereby it can be used to justify state support for care work and to argue that it is not possible to have a real freedom to choose care unless care is given a monetary value (Giullari and Lewis 2005). We also, as mentioned and as much feminist research argues, argue for the importance of building a society accepting both men, and women, to choose to spend more time home and with children.

When looking at the choices and capabilities of women we interviewed, it is important to remember their social positions. When they chose to stay at home for four years during the time they had small children, it was often because the man had sufficient income. It was their choice. However, it left them in a vulnerable position. If they were divorced, or the man died, they could be left with nothing, no money and no social rights from the state. The big questions here is, is this due to discrimination and inequality between gender, or is it because women are satisfied with lower positions and spending more energy on the family? Do women choose these patterns as they wish to stay at home?

Another explanation could be that being in a top position at work would motivate women to work more, also during the first years of their children's life. Many of the interviewees chose to stay at home for longer periods and explained it with the fact that their employers did not

allow them to combine the two. It is clear is that nowadays, women in Argentina often cannot make an adequate choice, as most workplaces do not facilitate them in having children while being in higher positions.

In Chapter 3, Robeyns (2003) points out how two people with identical capability sets are likely to end up with different types and levels of achieved functionings, as they have made different choices from their effective options. Our findings show that there are some differences in how the participants viewed a proper upbringing of children and what was the best way to live. As one of the interviewees said, she could not believe why anyone would choose to have a big career over raising their children. She outlined the importance of staying at home while the children were young. Other participants said that it was entirely possible to do both and that they were missing more facilitation to do so.

All these women chose to combine having children and working: and they often chose, or they were forced to choose, flexibility and less working hours while the children were small. The interviewees were in many ways free to choose what they wanted, but this was in most cases due to the fact that they could afford it, not that the government or their workplace facilitated their choices.

One of the interviewees was the first one in 90 years, in her place of work, who took out the six months of unpaid maternity leave, and she described this as something she had to work hard for, even if she was entitled by law to have it. This indicates that the rest of the women at this workplace did not take advantage of this opportunity, even though it was there. Possibly this was because they chose not to, but it might also be because of the existing norms at the workplace regarding women taking time off work. For women to benefit from their rights, it needs to be incentives from either the state, the government, the public discourse or the workplace.

It seems to us as if most of the interviewees had the guts, and possibilities, to strive to obtain their rights in the labor market when needed. We do however question whether this was due to society allowing it, or their backgrounds and that they had the financial opportunity to do so, as they could in worst case afford it if they lost their job. They would also in most cases have an economic possibility to hire lawyers if needed, something most women in Argentina would not have the chance to do. They should also arguably not have to work this hard for

something they were by law entitled to. This indicates a need for changing the norms of the society.

We consider it important that mothers and fathers should share the care work. The capability approach is very concerned with the individual, and everyone is different. Perhaps the Argentinian culture, where prioritizing family life still is highly valued, can make women have a slightly different view of this than us. Then the question would rather be if this culture facilitates the women`s sense of having a choice, or if the culture denies that it is a choice. If everyone believes that women must stay at home when the children get sick, it might be difficult to see and to question this norm. We did in this research talk to women who challenged this standard. It is however still unclear how many of them would actually give away the care responsibility if they had the choice.

Robeyns (2003) provides an example of the choice for paid or unpaid work by gender. Women do much more household and care work, while men do more paid work. Both kinds of work can generate many different functionings so that the largest capability set might perhaps be reached only by giving everyone the opportunity to combine both types of work. However, in the world, hardly any society allows people to connect market work and non-market work, without having to make large sacrifices to the quality of at least one of them. The labor market enables more functionings than care work (Robeyns 2003). Within the Argentinian society, this seems to correspond. The interviewees did explain making sacrifices, by not having time to do the things they love, not being economically independent and giving up on the big career they used to dream about when they were young, to combine paid and unpaid work. Further, as mentioned many times already, the women often sacrificed social benefits and security as their participation in the labor market was not based on a long time, formal work contracts.

Furthermore, Robeyns (2003) also points out that gender-related structures and constraints convert this choice from an individual choice into a collective decision under socially constructed constraints with imperfect information and asymmetrical risks. Evaluating the gender division of labor can only be done if we scrutinize the limitations on choice, and these may turn out to be very different for men and women. This is clearly the case in this research, at least to some extent.

Despite the clear signs of gender-related structures shaping the choices, research shows that most western welfare states are moving away from the assumptions that men and women make families based on the notion of the 'male breadwinner model,' and towards a new set of assumptions, based on an 'adult worker model' (Giullari and Lewis 2015). In Argentina, there is also a clear sign of this. Our findings suggest that men participate more in the child care and domestic work than earlier. Furthermore, all the interviewees were working, and would not quit working if they had the opportunity. Men are not the only ones responsible for earning and women for caring, even if this norm still exists to some extent. Our interviewees clearly outlined that they were in much less scale than men fully independent, economically or regarding choose of career over children. On the other hand, it is also the other way around, difficult for fathers to choose children over career.

9.2.3 The women`s work-life balance

As we saw earlier, what Sen has ranged as functions, are for instance the basics of having a shelter, access to healthcare and being able to take education and more complicated things such as having self-respect. All these are in this sense seen as achievements further increasing wellbeing and quality of life. Hobson (2013) added the concept of work-life balance to the list of functions that potentially provide wellbeing. This concept is of gradually greater importance in societies of today in which two-earner families are more normal. The job demands and work intensity have been increasing and the time outside of work in these societies is precious.

A primary focus in the capability approach is as seen whether people have the ability to live the life they want, and having a satisfying work-life balance is part of that. Assessing wellbeing and work-life balance can embrace many aspects of our lives that affect the quality of life, not just have employment, but work in an environment that allows one to combine having and caring for a family.

The findings of the study suggest that the women were concerned with having a job that facilitated them with more flexible hours while the children were small. The interviewees highly appreciated family life and that their children were doing well, were healthy and that they had enough time with them. Their children doing well was one of the main reasons for them to feel satisfied. No matter how they perceived their success, and if it was their career or

their family life that was the most important factor for it, they all mentioned the importance of spending time with their children. Achieving a work-life balance that allows this is thereby crucial if they are to combine employment and family life in good ways.

If the workplace and the legislation can make such arrangements, it can lead to the feeling of real freedom (effective freedom). They were also concerned with having a formal work contract that could give them the security of knowing that they could go back to the same position they had before the maternity leave. However, in the beginning, after the leave, some flexibility is crucial. All the interviewees had or used to have a maid to help while the children were small. According to many of the women, due to the man working full time, paying someone to help was absolutely necessary for them to be able to work. In this way, it was not the rules and regulations that facilitated for the women in having a healthy work-life balance in their life. However, one could argue that the fact that having a maid is so standard, and accessible, in the Argentinian society (for instance compared to Norway (Aarseth 2010) is a norm that facilitates it. However, this affects only those who are in a certain financial situation.

The difference between the two concepts (functionings and capabilities) is the difference between what we do (achievements/functionings) and what are the possibilities for actualizing them (capabilities). As we can see, the participants wanted more time with the children, and they all had maids. Some of the women in this research had both paid help at home and flexible working hours, in that way they had more time at home, and as the maid helped with the domestic work, they could spend more of this time with the children. In one way, the maid became a capability which contributed to facilitate the achievement of a healthy work-life balance.

When it comes to the interviewees and the agency freedom to achieve a work-life balance, our findings do, as mentioned, show that all the participants, in one way or another, could have a work-life balance that made them pretty satisfied. They all expressed being satisfied with where they were, and many were proud of how they managed to combine work and family. Nevertheless, they also gave us the impression that it had not always been easy, and that they had to be tough, stand up for their rights, and make their husband contribute at home, to achieve their goals. They were further in most cases giving up a lot of capabilities in terms of social benefits and with making themselves depend on others.

Capabilities and functionings are often hard to distinguish from one another since what a person manages to do is often linked to his or her possibilities for achieving them. For example, a poor work-life balance can affect one's health. It is important to make a distinction between means and ends in capabilities and evaluate what the long-term consequences are for well-being and agency freedom (Robeyns 2005 in Hobson 2011). The women we interviewed often expressed that they were not completely satisfied with the maternity leave arrangements. If the women could move from full-time work to reduced hours while the children were small, and then back to full time, that would provide capabilities for agency freedom in work-life balance.

Most of the interviewees in this research were not satisfied with the equality between gender at their workplace. Many of them expressed that there were more men in higher positions and that men would often earn more than women. According to them, it was only women who took maternity leave, and whenever a child got sick, it was the mother who needed to stay at home. As Sen claims, it is in the space of capabilities that the question about social equality and inequality are best raised. Sen (2005) separates between choosing to do and be forced to do something. It can be a violation of freedom even if what people are compelled to do is what they had planned to do. He has emphasized that the individual's capability to achieve functionings constitutes the person's effective freedom – the freedom actually appreciated by the individual. Even if women may not choose to have a higher position if they could, it is the fact that they might not have the possibility to have it, that makes it a violation of freedom. This also regards the fact that men only have the right to two days of paternity leave, and that there was often no acceptance at the workplace for them to even take these two days. They are also left without some capabilities: the capabilities to choose time with their children and to contribute at home on a larger scale.

As we outlined in Chapter 3, Hobson's focus is whether laws, policies, and discourses on work-life balance enable working parents to achieve a better quality of life. Hobson asks whether individuals can convert these entitlements into capabilities for work-life balance and, alternatively, what are the barriers (personal, institutional, and societal) that limit their possibilities for claiming them (Hobson 2011).

One of the biggest obstacles the participants of this research had for claiming to have a good work-life balance, was that there is almost no paternity leave for men. Women are also the

ones the society expects to stay home with the child, if, e.g., the child is sick, in Argentina. As outlined by a research of Monserrat, Lassaga, and D'Annunzio, Argentina still has a male dominated culture. Men are the heads of the family going out to work and provide for the family, while women stay at home doing domestic work and taking care of the children (Monserrat, Lassaga and D'Annunzio 2006). All these factors can produce weak capabilities and agency inequalities for women when it comes to employment, and for men regarding care work.

9.2.4 Conversion factors

Conversion is a person's access to various capability inputs, and the resulting capability set may come to serve as a basis for achieving the functions that the individual should value: Personal physiology (such as good health) and physical environment (quality of the maternity leave laws and regulations). For instance, this would be that women are healthy, and can choose to work, and not spend their days in a hospital bed. Conversion factors are the structures constraining or facilitating conversion. Examples of conversion factors women might have to struggle with are the social acceptance of having a maid or having children in kindergarten.

In the theoretical framework, we referred to Ingrid Robeyns (2005) who distinguish between three types of conversion factors. These three factors influence the extent to which a person can transform resources into functioning's (Robeyns 2005):

- Personal conversion factors (e.g., metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills or intelligence)
- Social conversion factors (e.g., public policies, social norms, gendered divisions of labor, social practices that unfairly discriminate, societal hierarchies or power relations)
- Environmental conversion factors (e.g., the physical or built environment in which a person lives, climate, pollution, geographical location, and topography)

For the women we interviewed, when it comes to work-life balance and equality questions, the personal conversion factors could be how they were all healthy enough to choose work and how they knew about their rights of maternity leave and other social benefits. The social position of these women is also of great importance, as it allowed them to take time off and

choose flexibility without having financial problems. They were further highly educated, and their knowledge made it possible for them to stand up for what they believed in, also in the case of gender equalities and women's rights.

Personal conversion factors that constrain conversion for these women could for instance be their dependency on their husbands, or how having children could make it difficult to get into the top positions in their workplace.

The social conversion factors are for instance the norms that exist in the workplace when it comes to maternity leave or if the standards in society accept women choosing to work and not to stay home. The interviewees in many ways described a reality where choosing not to care as much as they did for their children was not an option.

Environmental conversion factors could be living and working in an environment without too much pollution, and living close enough to the workplace.

Sen (1993) does not give any clear descriptions about what functions a person would want and expect to achieve. His argument is that it is likely that different individuals have a different weight to different functionings, maybe beyond some basic capability. Nussbaum (2006) on the other hand, found this position unsatisfactory and developed a clear list of basic human capabilities. One could argue that Nussbaum's approach is much more accurate and related to fundamental human rights.

Nussbaum (2006) believes that capabilities should be pursued for each and every person, treating each as an end and none as mere tools of the ends of others. Women have often been treated as the supporters of the end of others, rather than as ends in their own right. In this research, we found that the participants were unsatisfied about the fact that the fathers were not taking enough responsibility and spending sufficient time with their children. Arguably, the norms in the Argentinian society do not accept men spending much time with their children. Furthermore, it is a general rule that men earn more than women, and the married participants ended up supporting their husbands having a bigger career than them due to this. As he was the one with the highest income, they described it as more practical for them to stay at home, and also more beneficial for their children, as she could not provide the same type of income. Arguably, this is a conversion factor which can underpin Nussbaum's point,

as women chose to accept something they disagreed with and were left without a proper choice, as they wanted the best for their children.

Sen (2005) takes the difference between choosing to do and be forced to do something. It can be a violation of freedom even if what people are compelled to do is exactly what they had planned to do. A more obvious violation is when someone is obliged to do something he would otherwise not choose to do. As already pointed out, even if the women wanted to stay at home during the time their children were young, they should have the opportunity to choose, and the other way around for the fathers. The social conversion factors of the Argentinian society are in general, facilitating men in working and women in staying at home.

Furthermore, in Chapter 3, we considered Hvinden and Halvorsen (2017) who underline that characteristics of a person may affect the prospect of being able to translate access to means into a capability set and later into achieved functionings. The ability to convert means into a capability set will differ as well. Therefore, you cannot evaluate distributions of outcomes only based on knowledge about person's access to the means to reach such results and without taking into account human diversity and individuals different needs. Both the participants of this research and further women, in general, have very different characteristics. It was, for instance, a significant difference between the interviewees who were living with a husband, and those who were single mothers. The single mothers were much more independent, but also much more vulnerable as they had no man to rely on if they for some reason lost their income. Being this vulnerable could increase their stress level, even if they as outlined were in many ways the most independent of the interviewees.

9.2.5 Adaptive preferences

People adapt to the society in which they live, the norms, their friends, and family. The capability approach has in part been a response to the problem of adaptive preferences. People might adapt to certain unfavorable circumstances, and any self-evaluation regarding satisfaction or happiness will in this case necessarily be distorted. When evaluating people's well-being regarding functionings and capabilities, considering adaptive preferences gives a more objective picture of people's life (Hakim 2006 in Hobson 2013).

The interviewees grew up in a society with a norm saying that women are supposed to stay at home with children when they are sick or work fewer hours when the children are young. Furthermore, men are expected to work full time and provide for their wife and children. It is the world they know, and it is not sure it bothers them and that they are satisfied with these choices. The social acceptance on, e.g., maternity leave in Argentina can have the ability to weaken or strengthen the women's choices. As we saw an example of in the findings, if no one in your workplace takes advantage of the full maternity leave, you might choose not to do so either, even if you want and are entitled to.

In many ways, the women we interviewed in this research were very concerned with changing the norms saying that women should stay at home and men should work. At the same time, they would accept this as the men would make more money. They argued that their husband had a higher income, and it would not be beneficial for the family if he stayed at home. Thereby their adaptive preferences made it hard to actually stand up for what they believed in.

In Section 3.2, we learned that Catherine Hakim's (2006 in Hobson 2013) account of women's employment orientations (preferences) assumes that women's choices are based on previous cultural values and lifestyles. Women can be divided into three broad categories: work-oriented, home-oriented and adaptive. «Adaptive preferences» is a term that often shows that people adjust their goals to what they perceive as realistic or possible to achieve. The latter being the largest group, between 40–80 percent who seek a compromise between two conflicting sets of values. The latest would also be the participants of this research, as all of them combined employment with family obligations. Their adaptive preference would be that they should combine this and that this is possible even if they were also accepting taking a bigger responsibility for the children and the domestic work.

From a capability perspective, all three of Hakim's groups are holding so-called adaptive preferences, reflecting what they perceive as their "menu of options," shaped by experiences over the lifetime. Nevertheless, the perception of choices may not coincide with one's "menu of options." As already pointed out, Burchardt found that both women with few resources and human capital, as well as those with high education and household income, choose "voluntarily" not to be in employment, even though those with high education may have had

the most capabilities for exercising choice. She suggests that cultural conditioning may be underlying these choices (Burchardt 2002 in Hobson 2013).

In Sen's capability approach, we saw that the choice between starving and fasting contains two unambiguous situations, in which agency is explicit in the last and agency inequalities in the former. Further, what mothers and fathers would choose if they had opportunities for alternatives, is unresolvable in the capability approach and reflecting the more general counterfactual problem. One could ask them if they would have chosen differently or if there is something they have regrets on or about goals in life that have changed over time. For this reason, we asked the interviewees if they would have chosen not to work if they had had the opportunity. As we saw in the findings, regarding goals that have changed over time, we can go back to the woman who expressed that when she was young, she saw herself as having a big career as a graphic designer, but her priorities changed after having children.

9.3 Summary

To start with, and to structure our findings, we use structuration theory. We further use the capability approach to go even more in depth of the answers of the interviewees. In this way, we tried to understand their way of thinking about their life and work-life balance. The way we interpreted Sen's capability approach, is to have a free choice as being the most important point. For Sen, it is also important that the choices are based on good reasons.

Our findings show that free choices are also something the interviewees emphasized as important. They want to have the option to stay home if they want to, or work if that is most important to them. Moreover, Sen emphasizes the possibility to make use of the choices you make. We looked at some of the different options that are available for women on the various levels. We found that having a good work-life balance and being able to spend time with family was crucial for all the participants. By using the capability approach, we also learned that it is important to look at the adaptive preferences. Even if some of the interviewees were satisfied being home with the children and doing more housework when they were choosing flexible hours, having short terms contracts, or being a freelancer, they were undermining their rights, and in that way their capabilities. Thereby we cannot define this as a sufficient choice.

10 Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, we asked two fundamental questions:

- How do highly educated women in Buenos Aires, Argentina cope with both paid employment and family life?
- How important is gender equality to these women, and to what extent do they experience gender equality, both at home and at their workplaces?

We used qualitative method and semi-structured interviews to answer these questions. Using structuration theory and the capability approach as theoretical frameworks, we were able to find patterns in the strategies the women used to combine family life and employment, and to examine what choices they really had in today's society. As we interviewed 17 women aged between 35 and 78, we were also able to examine possible changes in patterns between the different age groups.

It has, however, been harder to find precise answers to the questions about gender equality, as it is a normative term, and the interviewees had different understandings of its meaning.

Due to the small sample, and as this is a limited qualitative research, we cannot draw general conclusions on the situation for women in Argentina. However, according to Yin (2014), we can draw analytic generalization, and we can for instance suggest what conversion factors are crucial for achieving work-life balance for highly educated women in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Argentina is, as shown in Chapter 2, a country that in later times has incorporated a range of laws and regulations to secure women in the workplace, and their possibility to work while having small children. We found, however, that the regulations are still not sufficient for a satisfying work-life balance and gender equality in all stages of life.

10.1 General findings

The women we interviewed were not only facing the challenge of combining childcare and work, but also other demands such as being fit, looking good and having an active social life. They considered the degree of gender equality at home and at the workplace rather low. The

increasing demands for women having a career were in a way developing faster than the legislation and norms in society. Women were expected to take major responsibility for the household and caring for the children, even if they had a career. They mostly had to solve conflicts between the two time-consuming obligations themselves.

10.1.1 Gender equality

Men in Argentina are only entitled to two days of paternal leave, and none of the women we interviewed reported that the father of their children took advantage of this right. Many even pointed out that it would be shameful and not acceptable. In all cases, the mother stayed at home while the children were small, but also later e.g., when they got sick and needed extra care.

The interviewees had chosen to remain at home for different time periods, from one month to more than one year per child. It was in all cases common to stay at home for a period before going back to employment. After the leave, they often chose to work part-time or work from home and in that way having flexible hours, without formal work contracts. Not having a formal work contract often resulted in a lack of social rights and benefits.

When it came to domestic work, only one of the participants expressed that she and her husband had an entirely equal division, and it should be underlined that he was not her first husband, but one she married after the age of 50. On the other hand, all the interviewees expressed that they had seen a change over the years, as it has been gradually becoming more normal and accepted for men to participate at home and spend time with the children.

It was clearly important to the interviewees to help the next generations achieve increased gender equality, and many described how they taught their sons to take responsibility at home.

10.1.2 Obligations, success and strategies to achieve work-life balance

All the interviewees expressed that they had some form of formal work, but having a long-term, formal employment contract was rather unusual, especially after having children. The reason for this was that workplaces did not facilitate the combining of work obligations and taking care of small children.

Almost all the women we interviewed expressed that it was harder for women than men to get the highest positions in the labor market and that men nearly always earned more than women. At the same time, the interviewees were affected by their adaptive preferences, and they did in a way accept that their husbands were earning more than themselves. They often used their husband's high income as a reasonable explanation to stay at home when the children were small. They wanted to change the norms, despite being a part of them.

The demands of the women were not only regarding their career and family life. Most of them took part in different sports and other activities. It seemed that this was also something they were expected to do and that staying slim and healthy was a part of the demands that women faced. They all seemed to love doing physical activities, but they also explained feeling guilty when time did not allow them to take part in all the sports and activities they had planned. In general, women were expected to 'be perfect' in all situations: be perfect mothers, wives, friends and daughters, while having a good career.

Monserrat, Lassaga, and D'Annunzio (2006) found in their research that successful women in Argentina defined their success based on family life, rather than on high positions, as many outlined that they would not feel successful if they were divorced. This was not the case in our study. We had a large number of divorced women, and none of them described themselves as less successful because of this.

This could arguably indicate that being divorced has become less shameful the last years. However, the women we interviewed were all very concerned with spending enough time with their children, and they outlined feeling guilty and less successful due to not having sufficient time for them. This indicates the high demand for workplaces to facilitate women in being able to work while having small children at home. The women wanted to have careers, but not on the cost of their ability to be good mothers.

Most of the interviewees chose flexible work and working from home when the children were small, despite sacrificing many social rights and benefits. Furthermore, one of the main strategies for combining work and children was having a maid to help at home. This is normal in the Argentinian society, and all the participants reported that they had different degrees of help at home. In Aarseth's research from 2010, it is argued that the Norwegian society's norms about doing everything yourself, and not hiring help at home, might be

unsustainable in the long run. In Argentina, the degree of equality between men and women is smaller than what Aarseth describes among couples in Norway, but having a maid is accepted. Arguably this is one of the few advantages the Argentinian women of higher social positions have.

10.1.3 A matter of having sufficient choices

We embarked on this research with the perception that equality between men and women is the most important issue when talking about women's rights. From our Scandinavian point of view, it is important to reach equality both at workplace and at home. However, as the capability approach emphasizes, what leads to a good life is having sufficient options to choose.

In Aarseth's (2014) research regarding upper class in Norway, the women were highly educated and in high positions, but once they had children, they described a change in their priorities. They started working from home, or they stopped working at all after their maternity leave was over. They described this as a personal choice, and none of them saw this as a sacrifice, but rather as a blessing.

In our research, all the women answered that they wanted to work. Almost all the participants chose flexible jobs after having children, and many of them outlined that they did not have enough spare time to do all the things they wanted. They also expressed that their time with their children was crucial to them, and felt shameful when not spending enough time with them. Having a higher position with even greater demands would neither facilitate spare time nor time with their children.

The capability approach outlines the need to have all options available to make sufficient choices: if you are forced into staying at home with the children it is not a choice, even if you would have chosen to do so as one of the several options. Gender equality is crucial for both women and men to have true choices. The women of our study describe an Argentinian society which facilitates and expects men to work, and women to stay at home. This has been changing, but it seems that the degree of women's employment is growing faster than the degree of men's participation in domestic work and childcare.

Even if we acknowledge that many women might still choose to stay more at home than their husbands do, there is a need for more equal rights in the labor market and policies facilitating men's participation in family lives.

10.1.4 Families in change and why gender equality is important

Elsteve, García-Román, and Lesthaeghe (2012) consider new trends in Latin America with fewer marriages, increase in cohabitation, and rising numbers of single mothers. As mentioned, none of the divorced women in our research considered themselves less successful. A few women were living in cohabitation. The shift in family structures was represented among the interviewees, and in a way, women were gradually becoming more independent, having employment of their own, and having the opportunity to divorce and be single mothers.

Family structures in change are also considered by Ellingsæter and Leira (2004). They argue that family policies in Norway support freedom of choice so that women can choose between time for work and time for children. The same choice for men is not addressed as much. We also find this within the Argentine society, as women are finding ways and strategies for both work and family life, while men are still working a lot without taking so much responsibility at home, even though this is on its way of changing.

Ellingsæter and Leira (2004) further argue that mothers that have jobs with a high degree of flexibility often experience an intense pressure of dividing time between work and family: they desire clearer limits on the unpaid overtime work, rather than flexibility and choice. This is interesting, as flexibility is one of the primary aims among the Argentinian women we interviewed. In this study, we questioned how sustainable this flexibility is, as it could remove rights of social benefits. If we further consider Ellingsæter and Leira (2004), gender equality at home is of greater importance than making jobs as flexible as possible. The research by Oláh and Gähler (2004) also looks at equality and finds that a high degree of equality at home, and fathers taking out parental leave, lead into fewer divorces and more stable families.

All the women in our research were engaged in promoting increased gender equality in families. However, they seemed to regard this as an issue for their children and younger

generations, rather than for themselves. In a way, their adaptive preferences made them accept their positions and the high demands, despite acknowledging that the demands were too high.

10.2 Superwomen: but for how long?

It was clear that the demand for women to have a career was increasing. This was both due to changing society norms and family structures. However, the norms and demands regarding women taking the biggest responsibility at home, and taking care of the children, were not changing as rapidly. Men were gradually taking more responsibility, but it seemed as neither society nor the workplaces were facilitating this. This leads women into keeping the obligations in the house and with the children, while building careers.

Because of the high demands the women faced in different areas, we chose to define them as “superwomen”. However, we question whether the requirements of the women, and the regulations and the norms in the present Argentinian society, fit together. Most of the interviewed women describe a hectic everyday life with little spare time.

The policies gradually take into account that women want to combine work and having children, but the trend among the participants still seemed to be that they found their own strategies. In order to rely on the laws and regulations, they needed a formal, long-term work contract. This was something many of the interviewees sacrificed, as they described it as very hard to combine with small children. The reason that the women we interviewed managed this combination was often due to their husband's high income and their social position. This system is not sustainable for everyone. We observed that the women to a large extent were dependent on others.

However, we did also interview some single mothers. They proved that it was possible for a mother to be independent, but they were also facing a lot of stress. They would be extremely vulnerable, if they got sick or for other reasons had to stop working.

Arguably the concept of ‘habitus,’ which Aarseth, Layton, and Nielsen (2016) consider, can be relevant when looking at the high demands the women were experiencing. We described in Chapter 3 how their research could be relevant for our research, as becoming modern is

what the participants in this research are aiming for as well. The women we interviewed were not moving up, regarding social class, but they were changing their positions in society. They were gradually changing the norms around and the role of women in society. They worked as mentioned more towards the younger generations, and less for themselves. This could in part be explained by this 'habitus,' that might need some generations to change.

10.3 Future work and our reflections

For further research, it would be interesting to get perspectives from lower positioned women, without higher education. Is it even possible to combine work with having children in good and healthy ways for them?

We would have found it especially interesting to interview women working as maids. As we saw how important these women were to the interviewees, we question how maids themselves could combine having employment and children. We do question if the norm which allows women to have a maid is beneficial for everyone, including maids themselves.

Finally, another interesting perspective on these matters would be the perspective and experiences of men and fathers. How is it to be a man and combine work with having small children? Maybe they are facing challenges we nowadays underestimate.

Last reflections

We came to Argentina with our Scandinavian welfare model bias, focusing on gender equality both within the family and in the labor market. Although there is still no full equality in the Scandinavian countries, much has improved in a few generations, both concerning social norms and legislation ensuring for instance that both men and women have rights to parental leave. For many young women in Norway, stop working and staying at home with children over several years it is not an option. Further, most people in Norway regard it as natural that fathers contribute relatively equally to domestic work and childcare.

With this experience horizon, it was interesting to meet the women in Buenos Aires with their experience horizon. We assumed that Argentina was a country characterized by a culture of male dominance, which the interviewees confirmed. What surprised us, however, was how engaged these women were in promoting gender equality, something the title of the

assignment should illustrate: The superwomen of Modern Time. They all expressed that they had succeeded in reconciling having a career and raising children. On their terms, this can be admirable.

The capability approach as articulated by Sen, claims that you must have good reasons to say that you have succeeded in life or to claim that you are living a good life. To assess whether the norms in the society and the legislations build up under gender equality in work and family life, one must go beyond the subjective perception of the individuals to succeed. This is one of the things we tried to illuminate in this research as a whole, and in the analysis.

Many of the interviewees were women mobilizing for their civil and social rights. They were engaged in improving both the legislations regarding parental leave, as well as changing the social norms in the society. Although they stated that they were satisfied, they also saw a need for changes in society regarding equality between men and women.

In the future, such changes could hopefully imply that one no longer would have to be a «superwoman» to participate in modern society on equal terms as men and to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

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Appendix 1 – Interview guide

Before starting the interview:

- Start the interview with a short introduction of ourselves and the interpreter if she is there. Further thank the participant for taking the time and letting us interview her.
- Shorty explain about the research and its goals
- Clarify any doubts or questions the interviewee might have, and make them sign the consent form.
- Turn on Dictaphone (with permission from the participant).

The Questions:

1. Background information

- Age
 - Civil status
 - Education
 - Number of kids
 - How long have lived in Buenos Aires
-
- Can you tell us shorty about your work experience over the years (Fist job and how your career has evolved)?
 - Where are you originally from? Have both your parents been employed (what kind of employment did you mother have)?

2. Evaluation of current position in their work

Can you start by telling about your current position at work?

- Do you feel that your education is relevant and that you get to use it in this job?
- When did you start working here?
- Is your work far from your house?
- Do you have a regular work contract (what kind of contract)?
- Do you feel that it is a good place to work (why/why not)?
- Do you have the opportunity to choose what you are doing at work to some extent?

- Do feel that your work is being appreciated (from your boss, your colleagues, family and so on)?

3. Relationship with colleagues, family and friends with regard to employment

- How is your relationship with your colleagues at work?
- Are there any men working here?
- Do men and women have the same duties at the workplace? If not, why do you think?
- Do you know if you get the same salary as your male colleagues (in similar positions)?
- How is your relationship with the supervisor (if there are any)? Do you feel you have the opportunity to speak up when there is something you are unsatisfied with?
- Do you have a large network outside the nuclear family here in Buenos Aires (and who are they)?

3. Internal barriers and evaluation of opportunities and everyday life and experience with combining work and family life

- Can you tell me about a typical day for you? when you get up, what you do at home before work, how you arrive at work, your workday and your tasks at home after work?
- What do you do in your spare time, (and when you are with your friends)?
- Do you feel you get (or did get) enough help to take care of your children while you are (were) at work? How do you get (got) help, from the state, family or friends?
- Have you ever had any financial support from the government (if yes, what kind)?
- What do (/did) you do when the person(s) who help you are / were sick and so on – and any other problems along the way?
- Do / did the children have options of day care or other places to be during your work hour?
- Do you think this have this been changing in how to combine children and employment over the last generations (ex: your parents' generation vs your generation or your children's generation)?

- How do you perceive women's opportunities to having employment while having small children at home in Argentina (and how has it been changing)?
- Do you feel that it is possible to combine having small children and working at the same time (is it better today than before)?
- What (if any) is (was) the barriers in having small children and working for you (tell us more)?
- Do you have a husband who work full time?
- What tasks do you have at home when it comes to children and housework? How do you and your husband/boyfriend divide these tasks (how did you do it while the children were young)?
- Do you think that there are many women in Argentina that chooses not to work if they have the opportunity?
- If you had the opportunity would you rather not work? (Can you tell more about that? why would you rather work/not work?)

Success:

- Are you satisfied with your life situation (why / why not)?
- How did you get where you are today – important people or events in your life that helped you get where you are today?
- Did you have a mentor?

7. Conclusions

- Is there anything else you would like to mention?

(Let the one taking notes ask any clarifying question she might need)

Appendix 2 – Consent form

Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Kaja Amalie Endresen and Ida Granmo Hertzberg from Oslo University College, master in International Social welfare and Health policy. The research will be aimed at Work-life balance, how women in Buenos Aires combine employment with small children and experience of gender equality. The main research questions are

- How do women in Buenos Aires cope with both paid employment and family life?
- How important is gender equality to women, and to what extent do they experience gender equality, both at home and at their workplaces?

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a woman with children and have employment in Buenos Aires, Argentina. If you decide to participate, you will be one of approximately 20 women participating in one interview related to this topic. The interviews can be held at a location you prefer.

If you agree the interview will be audio taped and we will take notes during the interview. We want to look closer at: What strategies do the women develop to combine paid and unpaid obligations? What are the mechanisms and processes (factors) that hamper or facilitate women's participation in the labor market? What are the mechanisms and processes (factors) that influence on the women's ability to benefit from any services in cash or in kind that are in place to accommodate women's needs to be able to participate in paid employment? What experience does women in Argentina have of gender equality, both at work and at home?

The interview will take approximately one hour. Since we do not speak fluent Spanish, we have an interpreter if you do not wish to have the interview in English. The data we collect will be anonymized and the audio tape will be deleted after we have written it down and saved in a safe place. We do not intent to wright the name of you, your work place, or any other descriptions that might lead back to you.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential by password on our computer and smart phone which we will use to audio tape the interview. Participation in this study is voluntary so you may decline to answer any of the questions if you so wish. If you would like to stop the interview at any time, let us know. There are no risks to you in this study. Your name, or any other personal identifying information, will not appear in the final paper resulting from this study.

Your participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact:

Ida Granmo Hertzberg: 0047 91681059, idahertzberg@gmail.com

Kaja Amalie Endressen: 0054 1123391555, kaja_amalie91@hotmail.com

Rune Halvorsen: Associate Professor Rune Halvorsen (PhD) at rune.halvorsen@hioa.no

Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

Consent to participate

I agree to participate in the conversation (interview) for this project. [circle one]:

Yes No

I agree to be audio taped during this conversation (interview). [circle one]:

Yes No

Participant's signature Date

Participant's name printed

Appendix 3 – Approval from NSD



Rune Halvorsen
Institutt for sosialfag Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus
Postboks 4 St. Olavs plass
0130 OSLO

Vår dato: 10.08.2016

Vår ref: 49193 / 3 / AGL

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 06.07.2016.
Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

49193 *Work-life balance and participation in the grassroots economy – a case study of working-class women’s agency and freedom in Argentina.*

Behandlingsansvarlig Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus, ved institusjonens øverste leder

Daglig ansvarlig Rune Halvorsen

Student Ida Granmo Hertzberg

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger er meldepliktig i henhold til personopplysningsloven § 31. Behandlingen tilfredsstillende kravene i personopplysningsloven.

Personvernombudets vurdering forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 01.06.2017, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen
Kjersti Haugstvedt

Audun Løvlie

Kontaktperson: Audun Løvlie tlf: 55 58 23 07

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Kopi: Ida Granmo Hertzberg idahertzberg@gmail.com



Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 49193

Utvalget informeres skriftlig og muntlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er godt utformet.

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at student etterfølger Høgskolen i Oslo og Akershus sine regler for datasikkerhet. Dersom personopplysninger skal lagres på privat pc, bør opplysningene krypteres tilstrekkelig.

Forventet prosjektslutt er 01.06.2017. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger somf.eks. bosted/arbeidssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette digitale lydoppta