“If I Don’t Do It, Who Will?” A Qualitative Exploration of Women’s Everyday Experiences of Rest

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Abstract

Rest is fundamental to health, overall wellbeing, and longevity. Yet in contemporary western society, moments of replenishing rest are increasingly rare. For women – whose lives are shaped by colonized, gendered power relations within late-capitalist, patriarchal systems and accelerating social worlds – rest is especially constrained. Despite its importance for our health and wellbeing, apart from 'burnout' research, there is very little published literature on how these dynamic social systems impact women's everyday experiences of rest and the availability of time. Through feminist standpoint theory, relational-process ontology and critical narrative analysis, this project aims to explore the systemic oppression that continues to shape women's lives, and how it impacts our ability to experience feeling rested. This foundation encouraged emergent sense-making and co-theorizing of what rest means for women today. Using snowball sampling through trusted intermediaries, I spoke with six self-identifying women over the age of 30 living in Te Matau-a-Māui, Aotearoa. Through open, organically unfolding conversations, we explored what rest means to them today, the barriers to meaningful rest, and what becoming rested could mean in today's world. The findings suggest that deeply embedded societal demands, expectations, and gendered norms and power dynamics continue to replicate and reinforce a dominant narrative that positions women as limitless caregivers – responsible for holding everything together while also being crucial contributors to the household through paid employment. Throughout our conversations, the women shared stories of their exhaustion and (un)rest, suggesting that the impacts of a late-capitalist society and systemically embedded gender norms are increasingly putting pressure on and exhausting women, greatly impacting our ability to have time for ourselves and experience feeling rested. Understanding dominant narratives of women's rest enables us to generate narratives of resistance and reimagine rest as an embodied experience that is vital for us all to live well.

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I hold limitless gratitude for each woman who opened their heart and invited me into this exploration of their life; thank you for your candour and transparency, bitter and beautiful honesty, raw tears, full-body laughter and everything in between. While we may have started off talking about rest, we ended up talking about what it truly means to navigate this world as a woman. Each conversation was a salve I did not know my weary heart needed. Thank you for your wholehearted way of showing up and sharing your story and experiences with the intention of helping shed light on our incessant exhaustion so others can potentially find themselves in these words and maybe enjoy pockets of rest in relentless times.

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Table of Contents

1 – Becoming a Rested Researcher

A decade ago, I experienced severely debilitating burnout that was driven by the neoliberal dream to do more, achieve more, obtain more, be more. Trying to rest and recover from this meant a complete re-evaluation of who I am, what is important, reimagining a meaningful definition of success, and so much more. As a woman business owner, still balancing multiple responsibilities and commitments – and who does not want to repeat the experience of burnout – I have a personal interest in the topic of rejuvenating rest and how women engage with it in a society that feels centred on keeping people exhausted and overwhelmed. I often wonder what rest means today and how we engage with it while swimming to stay afloat in colonial, neoliberal, gendered, hetero-patriarchal rapids that are ceaselessly increasing in velocity and intensity.

I have grappled with the very notion of pursuing rest, of *trying* to be rested*,* which exposes the problematic nature of dominant white eurocentric narratives and constructions of rest – often framing it as something to be earned and only deserved through productivity. The need to *try* to rest replicates and perpetuates this narrative of effort and output. In this context, rest becomes yet another task to be managed, monitored, and achieved, reinforcing the very systems of pressure and expectation it is meant to relieve and restore us from. The effort required to 'properly' rest can, paradoxically, become a source of exhaustion. This led me to wonder, if being rested takes such effort, is it possible for women to experience genuine and meaningful rest in today's world – to become and *feel* rested? These are some of the ongoing tensions I navigate in my attempts to live as a rested and well woman in contemporary society, continuously shaping and deepening my interest in how women experience and engage with rest.

My intersections of being a thirty-something, tauiwi from Canada, white, cisgender, heteronormative, married, middle-class, entrepreneur working and studying full time shape my understanding of the societal and cultural expectations placed on women regarding rest. These western categorizations that assign both privilege and multiple marginalizations mean I navigate barriers and obstacles, and often a lack thereof, in specific and situated ways. I am continuously unpacking and challenging these categorizations to better understand the power and privilege they afford me so I can move with them more consciously and intentionally. I acknowledge my limited, partial knowledges and the lenses through which I come to this work.

As a white, western, child-free woman by choice, I recognize the privilege of space, autonomy, and the ability to access meaningful rest on my own terms. I also remain entangled in gendered systems and marginalizations that see women's value through the lens of productivity, nurturance, and motherhood (Doyle et al., 2013). Even in my disengagement from the 'mothering mandate', I do not stand outside its influence; the stereotypes, stigma, and societal expectations associated with womanhood – particularly in relation to care, sacrifice, and selflessness – continue to shape the world I move through and how I am perceived and treated within it (Doyle et al., 2013; Gotlib, 2016).

I recognize that the conditions that have enabled me to resist or rebel against many of these norms are not universally available or accessible, and are shaped through the interlocking dynamics of race, socioeconomics, culture, ability, and more. I appreciate that my ability to choose rest is made possible, in part, by the privileges I hold – privileges that afford me the power, time, and resources to rest while still participating in, and benefiting from, the very systems I seek to critique, trouble, and move to disrupt. I carry these contradictions and complexities with me, striving to remain reflexive, accountable, and open. I remain committed to using that power intentionally, to navigate toward and co-create a society in which rest and collective wellbeing are not luxuries, but foundational rights shared by all. I hope this work might serve, even in a small way, as a step toward expanding the possibilities for rest, resistance, and reclamation for all women.

Waking the Docile – Reclaiming Rejuvenation

Throughout my exploration of rest – and in the context of my own experiences of striving to be a rested white western woman in today's world – I have intentionally tried to centre rest in my own life while grappling with how it is framed, commodified, and constrained within dominant social and cultural narratives. I have immersed myself in the felt-exploration of rest in my work and personal life. I acknowledge and greatly honour the privileges that have allowed me to do so while simultaneously recognizing how next to impossible it has still felt. I have always known – and those closest to me would agree – I am a much better version of myself when rested. Lack of quality sleep, stressful periods of time, and overwhelming to-do lists all make for an irritable, impulsive, and disengaged me. Maybe you can relate. Within this, I want to know how rest is understood today and what, if any, role it has in moving us toward a more connected, healthy, and liberated future for all.

With there being such little published research on the topic of women and rest, it is essential that I hear women's understanding and experiences of rest within their contextually situated everyday life.

I want to know how it *feels* to be rested and what pathways rest might open for us; who might we be when tired bones, strained muscles, and weary hearts are supported to restore and rejuvenate through deep, intentional, and uniquely sublime rest? I wish to explore what is already working well for women when it comes to feeling rested, so we can strengthen our connection to and engagement in rest. Better understanding the barriers to meaningful rest can help illuminate what expectations, constructs and structural and systemic obstacles are rendering rest inaccessible for women. To move toward and beyond conceptualizing and theorizing rest, I have woven rest into everyday conversations, discussed it with colleagues and peers, and continue to write about and ask for insights into it on social media and our business newsletter. I hope to learn and explore more possibilities of embodied and affectual rest for women as we navigate our daily lives – ways it can be an embodied experience rather than an effortful process of trying, reaching, grasping.

To experience the somatic, visceral sense of rest, I engage in my own meaningful versions of rest daily so I can know in my bones what it means to feel rested in the context of my life and the world I traverse. As I sit with the tension of desiring to become and feel rested – knowing it is good for my overall health and wellbeing – while contending with the relentless internal and external pressures of contemporary society, I cannot fathom implementing and engaging in meaningful rest in a context different from my own. And so, I have asked women to share with me, to illuminate how it is that they understand and engage in their own version of meaningful rest.

Broadening Understandings of Women's Rest

Feminist standpoint theory suggests that knowledge is situated and shaped by the social locations of those who produce it (S. Harding, 1992). While my focus centres on women's experiences of rest in contemporary western society, I acknowledge that these experiences are not universal. The perspectives explored here largely reflect the realities of white, cisgender, middle-class, heterosexual women navigating andro and eurocentric systems and structures, and only brush the surface of the distinct and intersecting oppressions faced by women. I use Judith Butler's reminder that gender is performed as we "enact…and reenact…received gender norms which surface as so many styles of flesh" (Butler as cited in Bartky, 1998, p. 27) to expand the use of the word 'woman' beyond societal

binaries. Rather than speaking for others, I aim to critically reflect on the limits of my own standpoint, and to foreground the need for more inclusive and intersectional feminist scholarship on this topic and experience.

To better feel how a rested me might approach this project, I reflexively explored my values, beliefs, and what I consider my spirituality, which remains central to how I understand myself as a woman and relational being. It was suggested that “rest isn’t a being in itself...and doesn’t have agency – that is yours, in becoming restful”. This comment encouraged me to consider how, although rest may not possess agency in the conventional sense, the systems that deprive us of rest – capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy – do not either. And yet, their influence is pervasive and continues to shape how we move, relate, and make meaning (Came et al., 2022; Card & Hepburn, 2023). These systems rarely articulate themselves explicitly – few of us ask, “what would capitalism have me, a woman, do?” – and yet, their influences saturate our lives and have power over our thoughts and actions (Bartky, 1998). As women, our movements are shaped not only by external pressures but by internalized imperatives to produce, perform, and self-surveil in ways that align with dominant narratives and social norms of discipline and docility (Bartky, 1998; Gill, 2007). There is a profound need to reflect on, trouble, nuance, reimagine and co-expand our understanding of and engagement in rest in today’s world.

Within this context, approaching rest as something to be in relationship with is not a displacement of agency, but rather a relational and linguistic experiment. One that resists dominant framings of rest as a commodity, a reward, or merely a tool for enhanced productivity. From a feminist relational-process perspective, rest is not a static state to be achieved, but a dynamic and situated unfolding – one that emerges through relations with self, body, time, place, and story that wake up the parts of us long fatigued (Braidotti, 2012, 2019). We cannot experience ‘feeling rested’ without reckoning with the embodied experiences of depletion, overextension, and disconnection that have been normalized and encouraged, particularly for women. From here, we might “de-link the pain” (Braidotti, 2008, p. 27) from the pursuit of rest and embody the process of *becoming rested*. Cultivating a relationship with rest becomes an act of both resistance and reclamation (Hersey, 2022). This relationship equips us with the skills to trouble and resist the forces that demand our constant output, supporting us in reclaiming agency grounded in a different rhythm of becoming.

Rest in Times of Unrest

I am reflexively aware that this research is being done five years after the COVID-19 pandemic was officially declared over, during the devastating unfolding of Trump's second presidency, amid escalating global strife and conflict, the depths of our climate crisis, and unspeakable atrocities happening the world over. To say it is a time of *unrest* would be an extreme understatement. While these factors made scheduling conversations and sustaining focus more challenging, it has become increasingly apparent that this inquiry is absolutely crucial; not only for myself and the women I spoke with, but for broader conversations about care, relationality, thriving over surviving, genuine wellbeing, and what it means to remain human in systems that relentlessly dehumanise (Card & Hepburn, 2023; van Bremen & Natrajan-Tyagi, 2025). Rest, in this context, becomes more than personal self-care – it becomes a radical, relational, and political act (Hersey, 2022). This work is essential because it asks how women are finding space to live, to breathe, to *be*, amidst conditions designed to keep us exhausted (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Card & Hepburn, 2023). It matters for those navigating multiple and intersecting oppressions, for those trying to carve out a life beyond mere endurance, and for those reimagining our way forward.

As I engage in this enquiry in the thick of what feels like a world on fire, I have continued to ask myself, how might a *rested me* approach this project? This question has been the anchor I have consciously tethered to throughout this exploration. Every time I feel the tendrils of exhaustion creeping in, I ask what a rested me might do. Every time I notice myself caught up in feverish energy and exhaustive productivity, I ask whether that approach is necessary and, if not, remind myself to pause and reorient toward generative excitement and creation – what, to me, feels like a more restful approach to the same task, interaction, or experience. This centring of rest in my everyday has had what some might consider counterintuitive effects; the more I feel rested, the more clearly I see things, the better the dots connect, and the more meaningful the outcome of whatever I am engaged in. The more rested I am, the more emotionally regulated I am. The more deeply rested I am, the more broadly equipped and grounded I am to better navigate challenges while remaining aware, alert, engaged, and ready for action.

While asking others about their lived experience, I wondered for myself, is it possible to navigate today's challenges, university standards and requirements, and societal expectations with

feeling rested as a foundation for navigating this world well? As I continue to relate with rest, I hope to approach a master's level thesis alongside my full-time work, life and other commitments, as well as navigating the current social and geopolitical climate, in the most restful way possible. So far, this has meant redefining what rest means for me, the intention of it, and how to be in relationship with it while allowing the evolution of current and emerging interwoven complexities to follow suit. It has meant a renegotiation of how I relate with my relationships, my home, my responsibilities, my business, my boundaries, and everything in between.

Needless to say, this research, alongside travelling with rest as a woman in contemporary society, has and continues to change and transform me and my life. As I continue to unpack and evolve my relationship with rest, and explore what it means for other women, I have come to realize the deep need for this research in times that feel anything but restful. This research seeks to explore what rest has meant, what it means today, who does and does not have access to meaningful rest, and what it could mean to reclaim rest as a woman in contemporary western society. Chapter 2, *Stirring the Silence: Situating Women's Rest*, explores and further unpacks the published literature and research (un)available on women's experiences of rest – offering a foundational understanding of where we are coming from when it comes to women accessing time and rest and where we might go with and from this research.

2 – Stirring the Silence: Situating Women's Rest

Rest has become increasingly difficult not only to practice and experience, but also to define and understand; this is, in part, because of its ever-changing categorizations and shifting meanings (Corbin, 2024; Scripter, 2025), while also progressively being overshadowed by an unrelenting androcentric societal emphasis on productivity and achievement (Card & Hepburn, 2023; Gill, 2008; Rosa, 2003). This evolution toward productivity and outcome over everything contributes to the profound confusion around what rest actually is, its purpose, and its value – personally, socially, and as a commodified concept. On a collective level, rest has been steadily devalued and disregarded over time (Corbin, 2024; Scripter, 2025); this has been reflected, until recently, in the striking lack of published research on rest – with even less published research on women's lived experiences of rest.

Women manage and navigate a complex web of roles, responsibilities, and expectations (Ehrstein, 2022) within sociocultural systems that are predominantly andro and eurocentric (Bharj & Adams, 2023), making it imperative to hear how rest is experienced in the context of their daily lives (Pitre et al., 2013). Rest cannot be generalized to all; it must be sensed, felt, and intimately embodied within the context of our own situatedness. It is crucial to unpack how our understanding of rest has shifted and changed over time, what has influenced this evolution and why, and most importantly, who benefits and who is left overwhelmed and exhausted – especially in a society that has been largely designed by men, for men (Parnell et al., 2022).

Mapping Women's Exhaustion

Women have long been positioned – by androcentric standards, societal norms and expectations (Bartky, 1998; Braidotti, 2012) – as the ones who can do and be everything to everyone all of the time while simultaneously being considered inherently flawed (Riley et al., 2019) and susceptible to exploitation for the benefit of andro and eurocentric systems and structures (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006). Many women bear the pressure of juggling multiple demands, including career advancement, family care, personal development, and social obligations, all while operating within societal structures that often do not fully acknowledge or accommodate their unique needs and experiences (Ehrstein, 2022; Locke, 2023); this contributes to women experiencing higher levels of fatigue, health concerns, and burnout than men (Pelly et al., 2022).

Navigating imposed societal gendered power dynamics, norms, and expectations is exhausting as a woman – to also have to navigate what, at times, feels like a world on fire can be debilitating. As I write this, Aotearoa's current government is significantly changing equity pay regulations – a regressive policy move that further entrenches systemic gendered economic inequality. Who has the energy to move through the complexities of their own life while trying to resist these abhorrent changes to equity pay when we are also collectively faced with: fast-tracked mining and infrastructure projects alongside the removal of protection of endangered and native species (*Fast-Track Approvals Act*, 2025), the Regulatory Standards Bill that appears to be putting profit over people (Hanley, 2025), a review of the Waitangi Tribunal because the government did not succeed in passing the highly controversial Treaty Principles Bill (Korihi, 2025), the increased allowance of glyphosate levels that poison ecosystems and communities (Martin, 2025), the introduction of another controversial bill to define a 'woman' and a 'man' (McCulloch, 2025), and myriad more. This all comes to us amidst multiple ongoing genocides, global tariff wars, the climate crisis, and so much more.

While the above-named bills and proposals are all problematic in their own way, it is worth further unpacking the current government's desire to legislate biological definitions of male and female and what this means in relation to women's access to time and ability to engage in meaningful rest. To enforce biologically ascribed gender is to further entrench societal gender norms and harmful power dynamics; this perpetuates the normalizing of exhaustion and disciplining of non-male bodies to better shape them into cultural, social, and institutional norms and expectations (Ahmad, 2023; Bartky, 1998; Braidotti, 2012). From the moment someone is labelled a female – often while they are still in utero – they are considered and often, from that moment on, conditioned into being 'naturally' nurturing, caring, and destined for domesticity (Gilligan, 1977; Robnett & Vierra, 2023). This 'good girl' to 'good woman' (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006) to 'good mother' (Locke, 2023) track suits neoliberal capitalism well because this type of labour is undervalued and unpaid (Ehrstein, 2022; Locke, 2023).

Because of this systemic exploitation and continued subjugation, women experience higher rates of chronic physical and emotional exhaustion and burnout (Minister of Health, 2023; Schaufeli et al., 2009) – a contributing factor being all that motherhood and unpaid domestic and emotional labour entail (Ehrstein, 2022; Krstić et al., 2025; Locke, 2023). I question how these intersections of

gendered norms and expectations, and conditioning based on these stereotypes, have led to a female-focused-neo-self-care industry that is, very conveniently, set up to help remedy women's burnout (Riley et al., 2019). It is imperative to question and deeply trouble this self-propelling cycle of socially constructing 'woman' as inferior (Bartky, 1998) to move them toward motherhood (Gotlib, 2016), burnout (Pelly et al., 2022), and the exploitative gendered self-care industry (Riley et al., 2019) rather than towards feeling rested and well.

Tracing the Evolution of Rest

One way to rest, according to Walker et al. (2023), is to pause from productivity or take an intentional break from a task. Rest can also mean "a bodily state characterized by minimal functions and metabolic activity," and "peace of mind or spirit," and "a state of motionlessness or inactivity" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2025a). Scripter (2025) offers that rest can be defined as a temporary pause in activity for the sole purpose of rejuvenation. Rest was once associated with a sense of ease, liberation, and growth; the Greek word *scholé* meant "to be at leisure or to devote oneself to learning" by engaging in relaxation or free time, often dedicated to contemplation, learning, and personal growth (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2025b). Rest was a time to find respite, to retreat from the world and go within – for no other purpose than to reflect, pause, contemplate, and create space for insights and wisdom to arise from the depths of one's being. These various uses of the word 'rest' date back to before the 12th century (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2025a), and the nuances and evolution of it, both as a verb and noun, foreshadow the complexity of this concept and our contemporary relationship to and engagement with it.

Rest and self-care are often used interchangeably and serve to, hopefully, restore and rejuvenate oneself on every level – physically, mentally, emotionally, energetically, and spiritually (Corbin, 2024; Torres-Soto et al., 2022). Torres-Soto et al. (2022) argue that self-care is crucial for longevity, overall wellbeing, and resiliency and should be accessible and stress-free for all; it is a safeguard for one's overall health and quality of life. Hörberg et al. (2020) suggest wellbeing increases one's quality of life by cultivating meaningful and fulfilling engagement in various aspects of life, adding richness and vitality beyond our worth being intricately tied to productivity. They found that wellbeing is intrinsically intermingled with "space for unconditional being" (p. 4). This is described as the capacity to simply relax and enjoy life with the inherent feeling of permission to simply *be*. This space offers itself, Hörberg et al. (2020) posit, in moments of solitude, moments free from performing

or achieving, and pockets of connection with safe and significant people. These offerings remind me of the origins of rest and how simple, yet essential, feeling rested is – and yet, in contemporary life, how much easier it is to theorize what rest has become and what it should be than it is to actually embody it in the moment.

In his book, *A History of Rest*, Corbin (2024) comprehensively traces the evolution of the concept of rest and further unpacks how rest has moved from being in a state of physical inactivity, yet mental and spiritual activity, toward something that keeps us from burning out from life and society's increased demands. Corbin (2024) also notes how we have shifted from a devotion to rest as a religious or spiritual practice – predominantly only accessible to a few specific populations and communities of men – to it being considered taboo and only sought out of desperation to recover. This points toward a slow, deep erosion of a purposeful meaning of and connection to rest – and yet a consistent upholding of its greater inaccessibility for women. Contemporary western society renders these experiences of rest available only to a privileged few who possess the financial resources and time to experience moments of stress-free pause (Corbin, 2024; Walker et al., 2023). In a society that feels centred on nothing but turning the wheels at an incessant rate (Žižek et al., 2021), how do women experience rest while navigating and managing myriad roles, responsibilities, and societal norms and expectations?

(Fairly) Uncharted Territory

When I began this project, I initially thought feminist psychological literature and research would be rich with knowledge on women's experiences of rest; however, I turned up very few results. Shifting search terms and phrases toward concepts such as 'self-care', 'rested', and 'wellbeing' did little to increase the outcome. Lack of research in this area resonated with Corbin's (2024) suggestion that rest was, and I would argue still is, "[largely] the domain of men, and, to a much lesser extent, of women" (p. 21). This siloing of rest is still present today (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Locke, 2023), leading me to contemplate Gilligan's (1977) distinction between public and private domains and how this concept might influence research on and access to rest. According to Gilligan (1977), the public domain is "traditionally associated with masculinity and the public world of social power", while the private domain is associated "with femininity and the privacy of domestic interchange" (p 489). Power, labour, and autonomous thinking reside in the public domain, inhabited mostly by men, while care, nurturance, service, and femininity reside in the private domain, or 'wheelhouse', of women; a

distinction that continues to be upheld through societal gendered power dynamics (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Folkes & Mannay, 2023).

Rest appears to be more available in and aligned with the public domain – earning and deserving rest through 'hard work' and physical labour – rather than the private domain of care, which is continuously devalued and diminished in contemporary society (Ehrstein, 2022; Locke, 2023). With western society leaning toward and favouring individualism, autonomy, and productivity over the interdependence and importance of care (Gilligan, 1977), I question how women might engage in meaningful experiences of rest. Rest is often associated with qualities western society deems as stereotypically 'feminine' or 'soft' (Gill, 2007; Gilligan, 1977); in a world of domination of male/masculine over female/feminine, it is no wonder there is such contempt for becoming rested and well (Eisler, 2014). With the rise of female empowerment and marginalized communities standing up, we are simultaneously seeing an increase in the risk of and explicit violence against women (Drakett, 2023; Koziol-McLain et al., 2023). It is imperative to maintain a critical feminist and relational-process approach to unpack, trouble, and disrupt the dominant narratives that continue to subjugate and harm women.

Caring for others and meeting the expectations and demands imposed on women, all while trying to navigate and negotiate violent and harmful systems is exhausting (Ehrstein, 2022), yet it does not receive the same respect as the physical, male-centric labour in the public domain (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Folkes & Mannay, 2023). This has contributed to a narrative that the need for rest, or a break from tasks within the public and private spheres, is either a weakness or unnecessary and frivolous (Gill, 2007). This notion of 'pushing through' was further supported by the breadth of research I found centred on the exhaustion and burnout women are experiencing at greater levels than men (Ehrstein, 2022; Schaufeli et al., 2009).

A key contributing factor to this rise of burnout in women is the relentless pressure of gendered cultural and societal expectations – which they must juggle alongside their domestic, private roles and responsibilities (Ehrstein, 2022; Folkes & Mannay, 2023; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Throughout this exploration, very little, if anything, centres and amplifies what it means to be a well-rested, deeply cared for, and nurtured woman. The limited comprehensive research published on women's experiences, of rest and in general, highlights an ongoing pattern of neglecting women's

lived experiences (The National Academies, 2024), leaving room for studies that focus on the continued pathologization of 'problematic deficits' of women (Gilligan, 1977; Riley et al., 2019).

Women as Problem

The research and stories (not) shared replicate and perpetuate the debilitating androcentric standards and benchmark women are held to, which Braidotti (2012) refers to as the '"perfectibility" of Man"' (p. 28). Androcentrism centres and upholds traditional masculinity and positions men's experiences as normative and the standard for 'aberrant women' to be measured against (Bharj & Adams, 2023). Braidotti (2012) further unpacks how dominant power structures are sustained and reproduced through the persistent pressure to conform to androcentric gender roles – roles that are organized within a hierarchical framework governed by standardized, normative societal narratives, further perpetuating the dominant cultural narrative of women's 'inferiority'.

Bartky (1998) suggests the inferiority imposed on women is socially constructed and societally replicated, sustaining and perpetuating androcentric ideologies as a foundational element of contemporary society; a society that has systematically moulded women into "docile bodies" (Bartky, 1998, p. 26). Woman as 'docile body', or some variation of woman as a problem to pathologize and fix, is widely studied (Bartky, 1998; Bharj & Adams, 2023; Riley et al., 2019; Zurbriggen & Capdevila, 2023); here, I want to question the implications this has on women's experiences of feeling rested and well – and how *becoming rested* might trouble and disrupt systems of oppression and subjugation.

As suggested by Gilligan (1977), men have long been afflicted by "the problem of women" and "consider women as either deviant or deficient in their development" (p. 480). This intentional positioning of women as a problem is replicated through societal norms, gendered roles and expectations, and power dynamics that ''rely upon and reinforce the cultural intelligibility of the female body as inherently 'difficult to love'" (Gill & Elias, 2014, p. 184 as cited in Riley et al., 2019, p. 10). When positioned in this way, women can either resign and conform – becoming the 'docile body' – or they can move to remedy their diagnosis and pathology.

Both options are conveniently catered for by contemporary society through the self-help industry (Riley et al., 2019) or deficit-focused medical models that have continuously disregarded women's lived experiences and pathologized whatever does not fit into the androcentric standard of

'health' (Fullagar & O'Brien, 2014; Ussher, 2023). Both paths are fundamental components of the cyclical process designed and upheld by today's systems and structures; society positions women as problematic and then offers the socially constructed solutions that further conform women into a socially acceptable way of being. This positioning further exacerbates women's exhaustion (Ussher, 2010, 2023), leading to women convincing themselves they need more help – further entrenching a self-propelling dynamic of neoliberal supply and demand.

It is imperative to question the immediate and wider implications of women intentionally being positioned as inherently hard to love and socially constructed as inferior and flawed; this portrayal has led to a collective of burned-out, under-supported, and over-pathologized women 'in need of self-help'. The predominantly feminized self-help industry as we see it today greatly benefits from this positioning, where the patriarchal standard of 'being woman' is the benchmark to aspire to (Riley et al., 2019). The myriad ways women can police and perfect themselves in 'hopes' of meeting this standard, and be more desirable and "better" overall (Riley et al., 2019, p. 3), have resulted in an inherently gendered self-help industry that is worth billions (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006; Riley et al., 2019). It is an industry that thrives on the commodification of the solutions to the very 'problems' it helped create; 'docile bodies' (Bartky, 1998) "becom[e] ideal subjects for late capitalist economies" (Riley et al., 2019, p. 4).

Capitalizing on Women's Flaws – Big Self-Care Doesn't Care

Women have long been disconnected – whether by structural force, pathologization, or social conditioning – from moments of genuine rest; they have been separated from moments free from pressure, outcomes, or expectations, from time to allow their mind to wander, process, and reflect, from the space to *feel* and to feel well within themselves (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Asp, 2015; Corbin, 2024). In place of this, women have been increasingly funnelled into a hyper-individualized, commodified, and suffocatingly gendered version of rest – what is now marketed and sold as 'self-care' (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Riley et al., 2019). This purposeful disconnection from rest corrodes our collective relationship with nourishing, generative rest, transforming it into a performance of wellness rather than a lived, embodied experience of rejuvenation (Asp, 2015; Scripter, 2025). In this paradigm, exhaustion of the 'docile body' is not met with care but with increased consumption.

Services and products – often inaccessible due to time constraints, access to resources and money, and other factors – are often offered to depleted and overburdened women as a 'solution'. Exhausted? Try this $4,000 weekend retreat that will most likely leave you feeling even more depleted than before because of the additional invisible labour you will have to do – organizing childcare, arranging travel and accommodation, and managing and planning how household and other responsibilities will be taken care of while you are away. The problematic gendered nature of self-help sold as self-care is but one example of how contemporary western society and psychology uphold and replicate the "inferior status" (Bartky, 1998, p. 26) women have inherited, and that continue to overburden so many (Riley et al., 2019).

Gill (2007) offers an interesting critique of the gendered power dynamics underpinning the self-help industry, highlighting how it emerges from and reinforces a social order founded on women being societally constructed as inferior. Within this system, women are positioned as inherently problematic – subjects in need of continual self-monitoring, regulation, and improvement. As Gill (2007) observes:

> *[Women are] rendered into 'problems' that necessitate ongoing and constant monitoring and labour. Yet, in an extraordinary ideological sleight of hand, this labour must nevertheless be understood as 'fun' or 'pampering' or 'self-indulgence' and must never be disclosed (p. 15).*

This reframing of disciplinary labour as pleasurable or indulgent conceals the structural forces that demand women's constant self-surveillance. The requirement to participate in such labour – while pretending it is freely chosen – perpetuates a cycle of gendered oppression. I would argue, being conditioned to depend on the very structures that harm and constrain us constitutes a form of cultural gaslighting – where gendered systemic inequalities are rendered invisible through the language of personal responsibility and self-care.

Aotearoa's Human Rights Commission states that each one of us has a right to not only the absence of disease but to "complete physical, mental and social well being" (Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission, 2025). Torres-Soto et al. (2022) highlight how self-care, often synonymous with rest, is crucial for longevity, overall wellbeing, and resiliency and should be accessible and stress-free for all; it is a safeguard for one's overall health and quality of life. Holding these offerings together, I would argue that access to meaningful, generative rest is an inherent right

as a contributing factor to overall health and wellbeing. I would also argue that our current western society is completely inconducive for this; founded on the bedrock of neoliberal, capitalist exploitation that renders many women overwhelmed and drained.

We are told we must be a 'good woman' (Lafrance and Stoppard, 2006), and the only way to do so is to listen to and abide by everything contemporary western society tells us. Rest, once understood as a natural and accessible state of being, has been made artificially scarce, rebranded as a luxury commodity, and sold back to women through a wellness industry that capitalizes on gendered expectations of self-discipline and self-surveillance so as to 'fix' themselves and to perform the 'good woman' and meet the 'perfectibility of Man' (Braidotti, 2012; Gill, 2007; Riley et al., 2019). Women must "perform[e] successful femininity" (Gill, 2007, p. 14) by following the instructions of contemporary society; everything from "grooming, attire, posture, elocution and 'manners' [is] being 'offered' to women" so they can "emulate the upper-class white ideal" (Gill, 2007, p. 14).

This imposed and perceived 'not enough-ness' conveniently sets people and businesses up to commoditize and capitalize on the internalization of the manufactured and fictitious flaws of women. The intentionally contrived positioning of women as inherently flawed is replicated and perpetuated through psychological research predominantly centred on men (Braidotti, 2012; Gilligan, 1977) and the continued androcentric deficit model of health and wellbeing (Fullagar & O'Brien, 2014; Ussher, 2023). Gilligan (1977) notes how any divergence from the norms and expectations set for men, by men (Parnell et al., 2022), "can be seen only as a failure of development" (Gilligan, 1977, p. 488). Hence, the need, from an androcentric perspective, for a self-help industry to offer the solutions women could not possibly come up with on their own (Riley et al., 2019). And if a woman 'fails' to 'self-help'? There is a pathology for that.

Pathologize the Problem

Ussher (2023) highlights how, for centuries, women have been disproportionately diagnosed for mental health 'problems' and are more likely to receive psychiatric 'treatment'. Riley et al. (2019) argue that there have been persistent systemically embedded "cultural associations between femininity and psychological pathology" (p. 8). Ussher (2010, 2023) refers to this gendered pathologization as 'medicalizing women's misery'. This persistent pathologization is especially apparent for women in the context of neoliberal capitalism and the patriarchal, eurocentric and

colonized systems we navigate (Lax et al., 2023; Martínez et al., 2021; Torres-Soto et al., 2022); women cannot meet the standard of 'perfection' set by men, for men (Braidotti, 2012; Parnell et al., 2022). These embedded narratives – and the imposed expectations to meet androcentric standards of perfection to avoid being considered a problem – often lead women to experience varying levels of depression over time (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006; Ussher, 2010). This depression can stem from living a life that revolves around the demands and expectations of others, reinforcing a sense of never being good enough – or even enough at all (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006).

While the bio-psycho-social model has begun to consider stress and social environments, very little beyond feminist theory has focused on "power, politics, or the gendered nature of psychiatric diagnosis and distress" (Ussher, 2023, p. 437). Women are twice as likely to be prescribed psychotropic medication like SSRIs (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors) than men – a "treatment", Ussher (2023) argues, that directly "locates the solution within" (p. 438) rather than questioning their situated context as a potential contributing factor in need of disrupting and shifting. Women as problem is increasingly upheld through the perpetuated narratives of women's discontent as depression through health and medical journals and policy, the 'self-help' and 'self-care' industry, magazines and literature, and social media (Ussher, 2023). So as not to invalidate, minimize, or dismiss women's lived experience, it is crucial to hear from them and how they make sense of their experience in the context of their daily life and the systems and structures they navigate. For some women, a diagnosis is valuable and "can serve to validate to women that there is a 'real' problem" (Ussher, 2010, p. 15) that they can move with in an empowered way.

A quick google search offers psychiatric support, therapy, medication, natural remedies (conveniently available for purchase and fast delivery), exercise, and rest as the remedy for depression – it appears to all be centred on the individual taking responsibility for adapting and surviving rather than questioning what is preventing us from being well and thriving. Could it be that centring *becoming rested* might help resist the medicalizing of and capitalizing on our discontent? And, if yes, how do women centre rest when the systems we must continue to navigate have a vested interest in our subjugation and exhaustion? The very systems that have been so long-standing that social and cultural norms, ideologies, and expectations have not only 'gotten inside' (Gill, 2008) but have transformed our situated context and become the 'standard' to which we hold ourselves. Holding Gill's (2008) unpacking of the internalization of social and cultural dominant narratives with Bartky's

(1990) critical feminist exploration of disciplinary power, I have come to understand how I and other women have become our own watchers – seeing and managing ourselves through the "dominating gaze of the patriarchy" (Bartky, 1998, p. 43).

The Watched Woman Watches Herself – Discipline Through Surveillance

The dominant and disciplinary gaze of the patriarchy continues to shape how women move through the world (Bartky, 1998; Bharj & Adams, 2023; Ussher, 2023). This gaze holds the 'perfectibility of man' at its centre and the 'good enough woman' as the ideal, submissive partner. Lafrance and Stoppard (2006) unpack the narrative of the 'good woman' that has been deeply and self-sacrificially internalized; a narrative, suggests Gill (2007), that is upheld through women's continued self-discipline through monitoring, surveilling, and policing themselves to meet the societal norms and expectations placed on them. Gilligan (1977) found that women have come to learn to judge themselves and be judged by others based on "their care and concern for others" (p. 488).

Research shows that women not only experience heightened guilt when taking breaks during work or while on sick leave (Brosi & Gerpott, 2023), but also feel guilty *while* at work – pressured by internalized norms that suggest they should "prioritize their care tasks" (Aarntzen et al., 2023, p. 13). These contradictory expectations constrain and further exhaust women as private and public spaces become sites of guilt, judgment, and self-surveillance (Braidotti, 2012; Francesca, 2020; Gill, 2007). The tension between being and doing everything for everyone and recognizing our inherent need to be rested and well complicates matters further; even when women have access to rest – whether by choice or necessity – they are often burdened by guilt (Aarntzen et al., 2023; Brosi & Gerpott, 2023) for not being self-disciplined enough (Gill, 2007) to meet the 'perfectibility of man' (Braidotti, 2012). In a culture that equates worth with constant productivity and service to others, taking time to pause is easily interpreted as laziness or selfishness. This cultural conditioning makes it incredibly difficult for many women to experience rest as truly nourishing or restorative.

Ussher (2023) also found that women have learned to judge themselves based on how they are of service to others and how well they live up to contemporary societal expectations and demands. These findings, alongside what Ussher (2010) refers to as women's tendency to self-silence

because of the demands and societal expectations, suggest that, for women, it might be easier, and less tiring, to resign and conform than to challenge and disrupt. This led me to contemplate the intentionality of systems, structures, and societal norms and expectations to be utterly draining and overwhelming; I wonder how much this exhaustion via oppression contributes to the 'docile bodies' (Bartky, 1998) that so many women come to embody on some level. What are the chances a burned-out and overburdened woman will speak up and push back against systems of oppression?

The "disciplinary power" (Bartky, 1998, p.36) held by those around us contributes to the process of erosion into the 'docile body'. Disciplinary power refers to the ways friends, family, acquaintances, and, I would now argue, 'influencers' (Lee et al., 2024) subliminally and explicitly influence how we view and feel about ourselves, and the behaviours and actions we do and do not engage in to alter and discipline, or more aptly, police ourselves (Bartky, 1998). This power dictates societal norms and expectations; it tells us who we are meant to be and how we are meant to move through this world. Because this disciplinary power is invisible and never named – to name it would mean the oppressor would have to admit they wield it – it can feel impossible to challenge the dominant narratives and expectations and reclaim autonomy and choice.

As explored by Bartky (1998), these internalized disciplinary tools perpetually overwhelm and exhaust the subjugated, fostering a more complicit, 'docile' woman that self-polices and regulates. Would it be different if we were rested and well? As women are policed externally and internally, there is no time or space free from pressure, demands, or expectations. Meaningful rest remains vastly out of reach for so many women because of the systemically embedded inequitable social and disciplinary power relations and dynamics they must navigate from their situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988) and multiple marginalizations and intersecting identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Salem, 2016).

Social Power Relations: Implications for Rest

Striving to meet society's expectations of the 'good woman' (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006) is already a complex and exhausting task; it is crucial to acknowledge and consider how women of colour, queer women, and those at the intersections of multiple marginalized identities often experience even higher levels of stress due to the structural and systemic impact of oppression (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Cole, 2023; Crenshaw, 1991). There is a significant lack of conversation

about the compounding and cumulative stress and pressure experienced by intersecting and inequitable categorizations of socially constructed identities, especially as we navigate gendered roles, power dynamics, and multiple marginalizations and silences. It is imperative to ask how rest is impacted by these factors from an intersectional, critical feminist lens, so silenced voices can not only be listened to but truly heard (Waitere & Johnston, 2009).

The Aotearoa Women's Health Strategy 2023 acknowledges that women are more likely to experience poor health outcomes due to their likelihood of sole parenting, being a carer, and receiving a lower income due to the gender pay gap (Minister of Health, 2023). This Strategy also highlights the compounding inequities and systemic barriers faced by communities who are already multiply marginalised – where intersecting factors such as race, socioeconomics, disability, gender identity, sexuality, and migration status further shape and constrain access to rest, care, and wellbeing; wāhine Māori and Pacific women, disabled women, those within the rainbow community, as well as those living rurally, face even greater challenges due to systemic inequities, racism, discrimination, and structural power dynamics that foster deeply entrenched and imbalanced gender roles.

The bio-psycho-social model and some feminist theorizations of mental health have begun to trouble, disrupt, and reimagine women's health, however, "intersectionality is completely absent from this agenda" (Ussher, 2023, p. 437). Crenshaw (1991) theorizes intersectionality as a way to problematize, politicize, and "explor[e] ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, and representational aspects of violence against women of colour" (p. 1244). Because the intersections of social power relations marginalize and silence the voices of many women, it is crucial to trouble the constructs of identity to unpack and illuminate how women are being continuously harmed and subjugated through a systematic disconnection from rest.

We cannot separate the societal and cultural implications from women's understanding of and engagement in rest, or lack thereof, when this is the water we swim in, albeit differently, depending on our unique histories and contexts. For me, 'the water we swim in' elucidates how deeply embedded societal norms and systems are in our daily lives – so pervasive that we often do not recognize their influence, mistaking them for a universal truth, thinking this is 'just the way things are and have always been'. Recognizing what constitutes our unique 'water', or situated, bifurcated, and partial lived experience and perspective, is essential because systems like patriarchy, racism, sexism,

ableism, and capitalism intertwine and shape women's availability of time and everyday experiences of rest. From this perspective, we can explore the nuances of how each woman navigates the rapids of society in different historical, social, and contextual ways.

Burned-Out: Navigating the Turbulent Waters of Gender Inequity and Neoliberalism

I was raised on the narrative that we must work hard now – predominantly in the public domain of men – so that we might enjoy life once we retire; where setting up the private domain aspects of retirement falls to the woman because the man 'worked hard to earn it' for us. I know many others who were raised in similar ways – some continue to live it, some still struggle to disentangle from it, and others have redefined and reimagined how they move through this life while within the borders of societal constraints. The idea of working hard and sacrificing now to potentially (hopefully?) 'reap the rewards' later has never sat well with me. It has always left me wondering why anyone would want to wait for an unpromised retirement to start enjoying and living their lives. This story suggests that the sole purpose of rest is merely to recharge us for more productivity and is something we earn only after fulfilling our societal obligations.

Instead of viewing rest solely as a means of recovery to return to work and responsibilities, or to get us over the finish line so we can finally sit back and enjoy, we could relate to rest as something much more fundamental – a vital, embodied way of being in and of the world. Rest, in this sense, is not a luxury or a delayed reward. It is a presence, an immanent experience that connects us to ourselves and to the rhythms of life beyond productivity. It is not something we must sacrifice ourselves for to be worthy and deserving of. As Harding (1992) reminds us, "everyday life [is] problematic" (p. 50); perhaps part of the problem lies in how we have learned to frame, package, and sell rest – not experiencing rest as something woven into everyday life, but as something we need to be in constant pursuit of – leading many women to burn the candle at both ends.

(Trying to) Avoid Burnout by Performing 'Progressive Woman'

According to Schaufeli et al. (2009), the concept of job burnout emerged in the 1970s as a way to describe employees' experience of debilitating exhaustion from work and the workplace, depleting their capacity to meaningfully contribute at work. According to Artz et al. (2022), burnout can be

thought of as “exhaustion or fatigue resulting from excessive demand on one’s personal energy, strength, or resources” (p. 448). Artz et al. (2022) found that women are more likely to both express feeling physically and emotionally exhausted and report feeling burned out. They suggest, contrary to deficit models that place the issue and responsibility on and inside the individual (Ussher, 2023), “workers’ perspectives regarding women’s role in society drive a large gender gap in job burnout” (p.447). Societal norms and expectations reinforced through the dominant patriarchal gaze (Bartky, 1998) greatly contribute to women’s experiences of burnout when it is in disharmony to their perceived inclination.

According to Artz et al. (2022), women with “progressive” – or patriarchal – beliefs and values reported the same levels of burnout as men, while women with “traditional” – or more private domain focused – beliefs and values reported higher rates of burnout. Artz et al. (2022) suggest this may be partly because:

> *[W]working for pay is not aligned with “traditional” women’s expectations or preferences, and they report more burnout as a result. By contrast, “progressive” women may expect and prefer that working for pay be a significant part of their lives. Consequently, “progressive” women that work for pay report less job-related burnout than “traditional” women that work for pay (p. 463).*

I wonder about the use of the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘progressive’ woman and how this narrative replicates and reinforces the deeply embedded patriarchal neoliberal capitalist. Where did a woman learn to become and perform the ‘progressive’ or ‘traditional’ woman, and are these genuine ‘preferences’ or imposed, learned ways of moving through this androcentric world as safely as possible (Bharj & Adams, 2023)? Since women are more often associated with the private domain, particularly ‘traditional’ women (Gilligan, 1977), I question whether women can become rested when also being expected to work the second and third shift in the private domain – taking care of the home and the personal and emotional needs of others (Ehrstein, 2022; Krstić et al., 2025).

Women’s (Undervalued) Second and Third Shift

Ehrstein (2022) reminds us that while having a family and tending to home is not burdensome at its essence, it is predominantly women who perform the ‘second (and potentially third (Krstić et al., 2025)) shift’ of childcare and household responsibilities beyond their paid work. Further to this,

the cultural expectation of excessively long, and often unnecessary, work hours within a hyper "masculinized work environment" (Drakett, 2023, p. 528) is understood to be not only unsustainable for all but doubly problematic for women because of it being their 'second or third shift'. Again, we see a piling on of responsibilities and gendered duties that disproportionately fall to women.

The 'third shift' of emotional work (Hochschild (1997) as cited in Ehrstein, 2022) resides in the private sphere and often leads to greater emotional exhaustion and has a negative outcome on women's work in the public domain of paid labour (Krstić et al., 2025). Daminger (2019) and Krstić et al. (2025) expand on the third shift to include the mental labour – like scheduling, shopping, finances and leisure – which they argue is exceptionally demanding because it involves "anticipation, identification, decision-making, and monitoring" (Daminger, 2019, p. 615). These aspects of mental labour are invisible, open-ended, and require multitasking – or what Rosa (2003) refers to as 'compressing activities and experiences' into our already finite time.

While working these additional shifts within the private domain, women must still navigate the disciplined confines and gendered constraints of the patriarchal neoliberal public domain and its demands and expectations. A cornerstone of this androcentric public domain is the new age workplace steeped in technological advances and social acceleration (Drakett, 2023; Rosa, 2003). Here, women are praised for being a 'girlboss' or 'supermom' – they actually *can* do and have it all! – further contributing to exploiting oneself for the benefit of everyone else, as society continues to valorize exhaustion. These constructed, imposed, and surveilled biological ascriptions of gender foster disciplined, fatigued bodies that are more likely to conform to oppressive societal hierarchies, power dynamics, and gendered norms, expectations and roles (Bartky, 1998; Drakett, 2023; Gill, 2007); unpacking and understanding these influences can help us move toward reimagined narratives of resistance as we trouble these dominant narratives.

Disrupting Patriarchal Ideals and Acceleration

Workplaces and their practices are not neutral, they are gendered, racialized, and inequities must constantly be navigated and negotiated – women are, again, more negatively impacted by these social power relations (Thompson, 2023). According to Drakett (2023), public domain labour emphasizes work being "all-encompassing, requiring a level of obsession, perfectionism, and personal dedication on the part of the individual" (p. 528); while Drakett (2023) explores gendered power

dynamics in the context of technology-focused businesses, I would argue very few jobs today are free from technology and this emphasis is prevalent across many different industries and sectors. As the creator and director of my organization and its sole lead facilitator, I have been continually called to question, to challenge, and ultimately reimagine how our team brings our work and offerings into the world – while navigating, and increasingly pushing back on, the constraints of patriarchal, neoliberal capitalism. Through my situated, emerging process of becoming rested, I increasingly question if women can truly feel rested and well, while running a business or working for others, in a culture shaped by systemic patriarchy and androcentrism – the same oppressive systems burning us out in the first place.

Beyond the expectation for women to fit everything into their time-constrained situated context, women are also subject to higher rates of violence in the workplace – violence that is minimized as 'bullying', or 'interpersonal conflict'. This reconstructed narrative perpetuates women as problem, putting it down to "personality clashes" (Thompson, 2023, p. 56) and individual failure to fit into workplace dynamics – or perform the 'progressive woman' good enough. Women are also subject to the 'motherhood penalty', where those who are or want to be mothers, must navigate discriminatory practices, perform to stricter standards, receive less pay and are less likely to be promoted or recruited (Torres et al., 2024). Drakett (2023) found that if women speak out about inequities they frequently experience harassment, bullying and violence – especially in online spaces – to a greater extent than men.

And now, in resonance with patriarchal business models, women's 'liberation' and empowerment seems to be promoted through the inherently neoliberal dream of being a female entrepreneur – the fine print is that the business must conform to the 'perfectibility of man' (Braidotti, 2012). As I scrolled through self-help and self-care accounts, tags, and profiles on Instagram, I felt wary and uneasy about the overwhelming number of women selling "empowerment" to other women. This performance of gender and patriarchy in ways that harm other women – commodifying women's empowerment and selling it back at a premium – feels very similar to societally constructing women as inferior and then selling them the solutions to the very problem they created.

Rather than questioning and troubling this exploitation and overwhelm, there has been a collective normalization and centring of exhaustion as if it were a badge of honour; when asked how

we are, many smile as they reply, “I’m so busy, but a good busy, you know?” This works to firmly place the responsibility squarely on the individual’s shoulders, claiming that everyone else is managing just fine doing, being, negotiating, and navigating everything all of the time and if you’re burning out, well that’s on you. This level of what I would call cultural gaslighting reiterates just how malleable dominant narratives are and how quickly they become internalized – we claim being busy as a badge of honour to convince ourselves that living life this way is okay. Yet women’s increasing experiences of burnout suggest it is anything but okay (Lax et al., 2023; Pelly et al., 2022).

The resisting and unlearning of these ways of doing business has been a challenging process – from implementing a ‘calm inbox’ autoresponder to remind people I will not be replying within minutes to turning all notifications on my phone off, so I am not constantly ‘on’ – and has been uncomfortable and confronting. This attempt to disentangle from the incessant ‘social acceleration’ (Rosa, 2003) – the phenomenon of “life [ ] getting faster and faster” (Canning & Jay, 2024) – feels, to me, exhausting in and of itself. I find myself often second-guessing and questioning my decisions to ‘do business differently’, and yet *it feels really good*. It feels good to reply to emails when I am in the right headspace, and it feels good to be more present with the moment than my phone and technology. Even when it feels good, it is still extremely challenging.

Troubling and attempting to disrupt what feels like patriarchal ways of doing business has been met with a lot of resistance and pushback. It has also been met with a lot of support, mutual aid, and co-creation of how colleagues and I want to be in business. In the process of becoming slower and more intentional in all that I do, I am simultaneously unpicking the narrative of ‘lazy’ and reminding myself I am still ‘achieving’ all I want and need to in this phase and stage of my life by reclaiming time and being more present.

Inequitable Times: Women and Social Acceleration

Social acceleration, as theorized by Hartmut Rosa (2003), describes the relentless rate of acceleration we are experiencing on a collective, societal level. Rosa (2003) categorizes these accelerations into technology, social change, and our overall pace of life. The technological aspect refers to the rapidly accelerating pace of “intentional, *goal-directed* processes of transport, communication, and production” (p. 6); social change refers to how society itself is changing at an incessant rate – concepts like attitudes, values, habits, social language, fashion trends, lifestyles and

how we relate to others is drastically shifting and changing. Finally, Rosa (2003) suggests, western society, specifically, is experiencing an acceleration of our pace of life. Pace of life, according to Rosa (2003), refers to the speed of our actions and experiences in everyday life, which, paradoxically, has sped up rather than slowed down as we would expect it to with advances in technology.

Technology is meant to free up our time and allow us to 'enjoy life more' because "time should become *abundant*" (Rosa, 2003, p. 9) – we are seeing that the opposite is true; time is perceived as 'more and more *scarce*'. Canning and Jay (2023) suggest this is, in part, because we are now always available, always 'on', always 'reachable' – we can carry our laptops and smartphones quite literally everywhere with us. Audible and visual notifications mean we constantly know we are needed and wanted by others, we can communicate with people on the other side of the world within seconds, and if real life is not holding our attention, we can instantly escape into any of the virtual realities we have curated (Canning & Jay, 2024). I am interested in how the acceleration of our pace of life influences women's ability access time and to engage in meaningful rest.

Rosa (2003) offers a compelling critique on how the technological and social advances we have made *should* create more time for actions like "eating, sleeping, going for a walk, playing, talking to one's family" (p. 9) – which Scripter (2025) suggests could be inherently restful if approached in such a way – and yet we are doing these things less or more quickly. We have developed a tendency to "'compress' actions and experiences" (p. 9) by engaging in multiple things simultaneously, like ordering groceries online while watching TV with our partner or quickly cooking dinner while talking on the phone. To be constantly 'on' is exhausting, and I cannot help but liken this self-propelling burnout to the turning of the patriarchal hamster wheel of neoliberal capitalism; Rosa (2003) refers to this as "the 'slippery slope' phenomenon" (p. 11) – one that is inherently androcentric:

> *[T]he capitalist cannot pause and rest, stop the race and secure his position, since he either goes up or goes down; there is no point of equilibrium since standing still is equivalent to falling behind[.]*

This gendered observation reminds me that, in a society experiencing rapid social change across every area of life, we are all on 'slippery slopes' because taking a break or disconnecting from society – if even for a moment – might leave us outdated, out of the loop, or 'uncool'. Women, in particular, have to meticulously consider every element of our existence and how it will be perceived

and policed. This leaves many of us feeling compelled to keep up with the pace of change in our social and technological worlds to avoid becoming 'inferior' (Bartky, 1998) and ever be the 'good woman'.

As observed by López-Deflory et al. (2023), Rosa (2003) does not account for gendered power dynamics, intersectional perspectives, or socioeconomic factors. However, this way of understanding and troubling social acceleration does offer a conceptual framework to help make sense of how social acceleration impacts women to a greater extent than men (López-Deflory et al., 2023). By holding Rosa's (2003) theory of social acceleration alongside Braidotti's (2012) 'perfectibility of Man' and Bartky's (1998) reminder of women being socially constructed as inferior, it could be argued that women are required to work even harder to self-discipline through self-surveillance (Gill, 2007) to keep up with the performance of 'good woman' in a man's world (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006; Parnell et al., 2022). This constant need to police and perform, alongside holding multiple roles and responsibilities while navigating complex power dynamics and systems, is leading to levels of burnout– individually and collectively (Han, 2015; Lax et al., 2023) – that we do not have the resources or systems to support (Card & Hepburn, 2023; French, 2022; Schaufeli et al., 2009); if anything highlighted this, it was (is?) the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Lesson in Covid

The level of exhaustion and burnout experienced by so many people in general, especially those with less financial and resource security (Brockner & van Dijke, 2024; Pelly et al., 2022), made me further question who has the privilege of and access to rest during pressurized times. For many women, the pandemic deepened existing pressures: balancing homeschooling, childcare, job precarity, and caregiving responsibilities had a cumulative impact on mental health (Locke, 2023). In the United States, frontline workers were "disproportionately comprised of less educated and disadvantaged minority workers, especially Hispanics, and immigrants, and earn below average wages" (Blau et al., 2021, p. 177). While it was challenging to find similar data for Aotearoa, it is telling that "women made up almost 90% of the workers who lost their jobs" (Duncan, 2021). The residue from these times is ever-present for so many, feeling the hypervigilance of never enough hours in the day to achieve everything expected of them between work, home, and life.

For women, there is still the added pressure of performing the perfect blend of the 'good woman' (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006) and the 'good mother' (Locke, 2023), exacerbating the ways we

must self-discipline through self-surveillance. It is in this grappling – under the unrelenting pressure to perform, to care, and to hold everything together without pause or support – that the experience of burnout begins to emerge. This is not a personal failure to cope; it is a deeply relational, gendered, and embodied response to chronic overwhelm, systemic inequity, and the impossible standards imposed on women under late-capitalist ideals of productivity and self-sacrifice.

Even in the midst of profound uncertainty, widespread illness, and mass death, the push to return to 'business as usual' remained a central goal – productivity was framed as essential, no matter the cost (Brockner & van Dijke, 2024; Pelly et al., 2022). Rather than making space to acknowledge the fear, disorientation, and grief that accompanied the pandemic – still echoing in many of our lives – societal responses leaned heavily into distraction, overwork, and emotional numbing (Brosi & Gerpott, 2023; Fiorini, 2024). Where was the collective pause to reflect on what the pandemic revealed about our social systems, our vulnerabilities, and our values? What time was made available to rest overstimulated, overwhelmed, and frantic nervous systems?

The lines between the public domain of work and the private domain of home became almost, if not entirely, non-existent as we quarantined, many were required to work remotely from home. This dissolution of boundaries made it more challenging to 'switch off' work mode, leaving many feeling like they were now expected to be unprecedentedly always 'on' and available (Fiorini, 2024). Paradoxically, Corbin (2024) and Scripter (2025) note that while rest was not practiced for the explicit purpose of being more productive, productivity was an inevitable outcome as people were more refreshed and restored after such reprieve; could it be that not finding pockets of pause during the initial outbreak was Big Business' biggest mistake? I am not invalidating or minimizing the work that absolutely had to be done – the essential and front-line workers who got us through an exceptionally challenging time deserve continued reverence and gratitude. I am, however, wondering if it would have played out the way it did, globally, had we not already been over-burdened and under-staffed while being devastatingly under-resourced and under-supported. Would rested humans have made the same decisions leading up to that moment? How might we have navigated it differently?

COVID-19 was a catalyst for making the implicitly known *explicit*. The pandemic showed us the fault lines in the systems and structures we have become completely reliant on. Women were expected to pick up the extra housework and responsibilities while also navigating and negotiating a

new way of life for themselves and their household during and after the lockdowns and the pandemic being officially declared over (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2022). The impact of COVID-19 on women went beyond an increased workload within their private domain; for many women, their home became a place of fear and violence, with spousal and child abuse increasing as people were quarantined to the confines of their immediate space (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2022; Kofman & Garfin, 2020). This increase in pressure on and harm against women showed the cracks in the mental health, medical, police, and social services in Aotearoa (Koziol-McLain et al., 2023) and the world over (Kofman & Garfin, 2020).

A Right to Be Safe, Rested and Well

Although health inequities and disparities for women have been known and well-documented for decades, if not centuries (Nichols, 2000; Short & Zacher, 2022; Walters, 2004), Aotearoa is only now implementing its first Women's Health Strategy to improve health outcomes for women – a long overdue response to "significant advocacy from women" (Minister of Health, 2023, p. 9). The burden of driving systemic change has been repeatedly placed on those already most impacted, reinforcing a cycle where women must continually fight for their right to wellbeing (Folkes & Mannay, 2023; Riley et al., 2019). This systemic reliance on women's unpaid labour and advocacy – even while trying to safely navigate systemic and relational violence – reflects persistent injustices, actively replicating, perpetuating and sustaining them. No wonder there is so little time and space to rest and rejuvenate – who has the time? Within the troubling of rest, it is important to explore what might help – how might women find moments of pause and move toward becoming and feeling rested within the confines and demands of society?

The Human Rights Commission describes our "right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health", even if we must interrogate the "underlying social and economic determinants of health" (Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission, 2025). Torres-Soto et al. (2022) contend that, because self-care is crucial for one's overall wellbeing and resiliency, it should be accessible and stress-free for all. To move toward this, we must question and disrupt the dominant narratives that perpetuate exhaustion. To move beyond systems that measure a woman's worth based on her productivity and how she serves others, we must create "space for unconditional being" (Hörberg et al., 2020, p. 4); space free from performing the 'good woman' (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006) and space to connect with safe and significant people (Hörberg et al., 2020) without having to

perform the 'good mother'. It is crucial to hear situated, partial knowledges of what feeling rested means to women today, so we can begin to weave together a tapestry of understanding as we move to trouble and reimagine the embedded societal norms, narratives, and expectations perpetuating the cycles of exhaustion and harm.

Sifting Through and Reflecting on the Ashes of Burnout

When I experienced severe, hospitalizing burnout from bending to, and breaking from, society's expectations and 'thriving in a man's world', I was prescribed rest. At the time, I remember thinking rest meant long bubble baths and essential oils. It felt like indulging in luxuries so that I came out shiny and new on the other side. It was never explained as setting and holding boundaries, eating healthily for my body and mind, sitting with dear friends and laughing until we cried, walking our dog along the beach and watching the sunset with awe and reverence for nature. Self-care was always self-soothing to numb the pain of living in a society of systems and structures that were draining the life out of me. The prescribed self-care did not account for the guilt of not being productive that was lingering in the shadows, waiting to pounce when rest was starting to replenish me – the guilt that would drive me back to work and, seemingly as a disciplinary force of social expectations, out of rest far too soon. This guilt would inevitably lead to another crash and burn.

My second bout of burnout – or, more aptly, the continuation of the first – forced me to step back, get real with myself and my loved ones, and deeply reflect on what was working and what was not. It became imperative that I redefine what it means to be rested and well, to me, and cultivate the capacity to trouble and resist the systems and structures I continue to navigate. I started exploring more integrative, holistic and socially centred ways of rest and care. It was once I stopped clawing and forcing my way through recovery and started navigating my way through restoration, I felt what embodying rest could lead to. It started to feel possible that a rested woman could resist the imposed constraints of social structures, assumptions and stereotypes; that a rested woman could have the capacity to resist and trouble consumerism, neoliberal capitalism, and patriarchal systems because, while she may still be positioned as a 'docile bod[y]' (Bartky, 1998), she can more easily recognize systems of oppression and engage in rest as an embodied form of resistance. I came to believe that a rested, nourished, and well woman is a dangerous woman. She is dangerous because, while she remains within and continues to navigate contemporary western society, she recognizes and resists

the disciplinary power in ways that trouble it, challenge it, and potentially disrupt it. Imagine, for a moment, a collective of rested women. A collective that can bring the system to its knees.

Resisting by Existing

Tricia Hersey's (2022) book, *Rest is Resistance,* has been a companion and guiding compass as I move through the world and with this project, it has been a steady reminder that rest, and non-commodified self-care, can be radical forms of resistance to systems of oppression and a political healing mechanism. Hersey (2022) rejects the "toxic idea that we are resting to recharge and rejuvenate so we can be prepared to give more output to capitalism" (p. 46). Hersey (2022) illuminates the origin and evolution of the self-care and rest movement, recentring its place in resistance to the commodification and exploitation of Black people "from chattel slavery to contemporary grind and hustle culture" (p. 119). Learning from and with Hersey, we can challenge the idea that rest is simply a break from productivity – rest is a radical reclamation of self and a fierce resistance to patriarchal society steeped in neoliberal white supremacy that continues to oppress women. She offers meaningful, nourishing rest as an embodied felt-sense that allows a disentanglement from systems of oppression and productivity at all costs.

Holding rest in this way requires an intersectional (Cole, 2023; Salem, 2016) and womanist approach (Monier, 2023); this continues to guide how I navigate not co-opting or white-washing a meaningful and, what Hersey often refers to as, sacred practice through the translation of stories and experiences (Fine, 2017; Waitere & Johnston, 2009). In this context, rest becomes a passively embodied, yet profound, form of resistance. This has me wondering if rest might help us resist these deeply embedded and exploitive narratives, systems and structures in ways that do not feel like fighting – an exhausting approach – but feel more like a different way of moving through the world.

Asp (2015) suggests that rest is not a static, stagnant state; we ebb and flow between states of rest and non-rest. Moving in flux with rest and non-rest means we can restore and rejuvenate our disciplined bodies in ways that are best for us, helping us better navigate the moments of non-rest and challenges that increasingly come our way. Within the process of *becoming rested*, we can begin to resist the conditioning that our value and worth is directly linked to our level of production and achievement; rather than 'sleep when I'm dead', we can be content in the present moment.

For Asp (2015), rest is a state of "being in harmony in motivation, feeling and action" (p. 1); our actions are carried out intentionally to experience pleasure and ease. This embodied experience of moving through the world rested, rather than in a state of seeking or pursuing rest, troubles the notion that one must constantly 'work hard' to deserve rest and leisure. While so many are exhausting themselves for the neoliberal dream, Eisler (2014) declares the "most essential work" (p. 98) we can do, on a societal and systemic level, is the "work of caring for people and…our natural environment" (p. 98). She reminds us that "economic systems do not arise in a vacuum" (p. 98); they are emergent, and they shape, and are shaped by, the wider systems and structures they are contextualized within. Without women sacrificing themselves for neoliberal capitalism and misogynistic patriarchy, those systems might just crumble.

Eisler's (2014) life work is grounded in moving us from the current domination – or power over – system toward a partnership model, a model that centres equity, wellbeing, and liberation for all. This shift asks us not to try and change systems of oppression using the same tools that uphold and perpetuate them. It asks us to critique the violence, injustice, and exploitation central to our current androcentric neoliberal capitalism, and the varying flavours of it we have experienced over centuries (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Came et al., 2022; Eisler, 2014). It asks us not to 'smash the patriarchy' but to collectively reimagine and cultivate a society that centres the wellbeing and flourishing of all.

A societal shift like this would require us to reflect on what is important, what is inherently valuable, and what an equitable and just future might feel like for all (Chandler, 2023; Eisler, 2014). Here, I attempt to situate myself, while holding whatever partial knowledges I have about the different ways women move through the world, and contemplate what sort of world we could co-create if policy-makers, legislators, medical professionals, and the like, did not know if they would come into the world as a woman or other marginalized identity; would men in power make the same decisions if they came back into this world as a single mother? A mother with chronic fatigue, bills to pay, and people to support?

Moving From and Toward Rest

Women are rest-poor due to a systemic gender deficit, with ongoing impacts and implications for their everyday lived experiences. Even beyond the patriarchal gatekeeping of rest (Corbin, 2024;

Monier, 2023), there is a clear shift in the definition of rest compared to its earlier western understanding, purpose and practice; there is a devaluation and erasing of rest within contemporary neoliberal contexts. I wonder how purposeful this erasure has been; if rest was once meant to support a path of self-realization, insight, and deeper learning, it could be surmised that non-rested people, especially women, are considered more easily influenced and compliant with societal norms and expectations, an added benefit to the perpetual manifestation of the neoliberal dream. Bartky (1998) suggests "this [patriarchal] system aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companions of men" (p. 37); if society is predominantly created for men, by men (Parnell et al., 2022) it stands to reason that compliant, docile bodies greatly benefit the current system. Holding this alongside the Merriam-Webster definitions of rest and the etymology and history of the word opens a Pandora's box of how today's western, androcentric and eurocentric society has influenced and is influenced by our collective redefining, categorizing and commodifying of rest.

I am interested in how these ever-evolving categorizations of rest impact on and are experienced by women in society as we traverse it today; is it possible for women to become rested while navigating and negotiating the confines, demands, and expectations of contemporary society? Through this research, I seek to better understand what works well for women when it comes to engaging in adequate and nourishing rest, what supports their experience of it, what influences the (in)accessibility of rest, and what obstacles and barriers women encounter when it comes to becoming rested. From the situated stories shared by each woman, and our co-created knowledges, this research seeks to challenge, disrupt, and reimagine societal and cultural norms and social practices to move toward a more supportive environment for women to engage in meaningful moments of feeling rested. In the next chapter, *Storytelling as Methodology and Theoretical Foundations*, I discuss the epistemological, methodological, and ethical considerations, design, and frameworks that are the foundation to this research and how they support an emergent understanding of women's rest and the social change we might move toward.

3 – Storytelling as Methodology and Theoretical Foundations

This body of work explores the labyrinth that is women's everyday experiences of rest in contemporary life. It is rooted in an ontological and epistemological commitment to the complexity, situatedness, and relationality of women's experiences. I weave together relational-process ontology, feminist standpoint theory, and affirmative relational ethics with a critical narrative methodology to explore the sociocultural, embodied, intersectional and relational aspects of rest. Coalescing these theoretical frameworks allows for a meandering, emergent journey through what is largely uncharted territory. This work honours the idea that knowledge is not fixed or singular but partial, situated, and bifurcated (Haraway, 1988; S. Harding, 1992).

Through this project, I set out to explore how women negotiate and navigate rest within contemporary eurocentric, patriarchal gender norms and expectations; feminist standpoint theory invites the often silenced voices, stories, and knowledges of women to be heard and felt as we co-create knowledges on becoming rested and well women in today's world. The stories shared by the women who took part in this study are not data to be decoded but rich expressions of lived experience – offered, received, and reflected upon in relational dialogue. In this way, the research becomes an open-ended process of engaging with rest as it is lived, felt, and made meaningful in relationship with self and others while navigating the complex dynamics of contemporary society.

Rest as Relational and Emergent

Karen Barad reminds us, "existence is not an individual affair" (Barad, 2007, p. ix). Likewise, rest, even when engaged in on one's own, is not an individual affair; someone must pick up what you are putting down, professional and personal relationships must be navigated, and the pressures and expectations of the systems and structures we operate within must be negotiated. These 'entanglements', as Barad (2007) refers to interweaving relational aspects of existence, shape how women experience rest. Barad (2007) posits that "individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating" (p. ix). I hold this alongside Braidotti's offerings of process ontology grounded in affirmative relational ethics as I try to reimagine and restory what makes a rested and

well woman in today's world (Braidotti, 2008, 2012, 2019). Process ontology encourages *becoming* over being, *dynamic* over static, and *relational* over isolated. This blended ontological approach recognizes the dynamic, emergent, and ever-evolving becomings of reality.

The non-linear and dynamic process of shifting and evolving from an unrested, 'docile body' toward *becoming* a rested woman happens within the contexts and dynamics of relationships. Rest dynamically emerges within relational entanglements – be it family, work, institutions, communal spaces, or other bodies; it is not an isolated decision or static state of immobility or seclusion (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2019). Experiences of rest are not fixed; they unfold and evolve, ebbing and flowing from short, sweet moments to deep, long generative practices. This reflects the fluid process of everyday life (Braidotti, 2010, 2019). A relational-process ontology allows for a deeper appreciation of rest as a dynamic, evolving, immanent experience, while making space to critically engage with the social and structural forces that shape rest, inform how women experience it, and decide who is and is not granted access to it (Braidotti, 2019; Pitre et al., 2013; Ussher, 2023). This interconnected approach resists framing rest solely through a lens of deficit and individualism, moving us through the complex, entangled conditions through which rest becomes possible or rendered an out-of-reach dream (Barad, 2007).

Rest is situated and steeped in the context of individual and collective history, social power relations, and the ever-changing global, political and socioeconomic circumstances (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Corbin, 2024; Scripter, 2025). Braidotti (2008) and Salem (2016) pave the way for us to move from fixed identities and stifling categories toward fluid, interconnected processes and relationships. This is how I move with Braidotti (2008) to de-colonize, de-psychologize, and de-pathologize being unrested and exhausted as we navigate toward rejuvenation through meaningful rest – potentially capacitating us to recognize and resist systems of oppression. From here, we can ontologically move from androcentric and oppressive psychological frameworks based on scientific inquiry and deficit-focused medical models (Fullagar & O'Brien, 2014) that search for and discover singular truths detached from contexts, relationships, and bodies toward genuine and expansive considerations of the social, cultural, and political dimensions of the situated lived experiences of women as we address our incessant exhaustion and overwhelm.

Partial, Situated and Contextual

As a woman and a feminist, my scholarly location is informed by feminist standpoint theory (Harding, 1992) and shaped by bell hooks' definition of feminism as a "movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks, 2014, p. viii). These form the foundation of my exploration into how women experience and engage in unique and meaningful rest in today's world, while also fulfilling societal expectations within a neoliberal, patriarchal, and neocolonial society (Monier, 2023). By exploring the categorized and commodified phenomenon of rest from the standpoint of women, and remaining anchored in anti-sexism, I am interested in how the outcomes may be relatively beneficial for women as *feeling rested* is studied more broadly over time as an everyday fluid and dynamic lived experience and not as a therapy for pathology.

Standpoint theory posits that knowledge is partial and socially situated, therefore marginalized groups, such as women, offer unique and profoundly valuable perspectives and insights (S. Harding, 1992). This epistemological approach resists generalized or universal claims, honouring women as the experts of knowledges produced through their lived experiences. Valuing and centring situated knowledges ensures we are hearing from women whose particular positions and perspectives are often subjugated, marginalized, and silenced at the intersections of inequitable social power relations and gendered norms and assumptions of what it means to be a woman (Cole, 2023; Huirem et al., 2023; Ussher, 2023). As we move to co-create knowledge of what it means for women to feel rested today, the nuance and depth added by hearing from and learning alongside women's situated truths is a crucial element.

Crenshaw's (1991) approach to intersectionality helped inform how I move with each woman's experience of race, socioeconomics, and gendered oppression within a patriarchal, eurocentric framework. Intersectionality, grounded in standpoint theory, centres each woman's situated lived experience and highlights how their everyday experiences reflect the tensions between internalized andro and eurocentric gender norms and their personal understanding of what it means to be a rested and well woman. By being in conversation and learning with women navigating contemporary society, we co-created research that highlights the interplay between various societal factors and creates space to reimagine comprehensive, creative, and more restful ways forward. This interplay can create a dissonance between the dominant societal narratives and expectations and

their own lived realities, troubling systems of oppression that are working to keep women docile, inferior, and ultimately exhausted (Bartky, 1998; Cole, 2023; S. Harding, 1992).

While I may share points of connection and commonality with the women I engaged with, within and beyond the context of this project, I remain mindful that their lived experiences and the complex, intersectional challenges they navigate are uniquely their own and cannot be fully known or assumed by me (Crenshaw, 1991; Salem, 2016). To maintain a sense of balance between holding my own situated experiences, those I spoke with for this project, and the emerging co-creation of knowledge, I engaged with what Fine (2017) refers to as a responsibility to "see / feel / hear / act" (p. 120); bringing me into a deeper relationship with myself and those I sat and spoke with while respecting the nuance of shared yet different lived experiences. I hold Waitere and Johnston (2009) close as a reminder to listen with my whole self, to remain attuned to the felt and often unseen dimensions of each woman's story, and to honour the rich, intersectional terrains that shape our lives as best I can.

To remain grounded in affirmative relational ethics, I continuously focused on and centred the interconnectedness of people and the ethical responsibilities that arise from being in right relationship through deep, embodied listening (Braidotti, 2008; Waitere & Johnston, 2009). As I listen and learn alongside each woman, I acknowledge that an inability to engage in meaningful rest is so much more than an individual issue; it is entangled and deeply rooted in and intertwined with systemic inequalities and power dynamics (Asp, 2015; Bharj & Adams, 2023; Ehrstein, 2022; Ussher, 2023). This has informed how I move to transform the kinds of stories being told and heard to include and centre women's voices and experiences, creating a more nuanced narrative to clearly reflect the complexity of the lived experience of rest.

This Work is Critical – Narrative Inquiry Meets Critical Theory

Narrative inquiry is an inherently multidisciplinary and participant-centred approach, encouraging a more robust understanding of the lived experiences of people through the rich offerings shared through their storytelling (Woodiwiss et al., 2017). With such little published research on women and rest, starting with a relational exploration into situated truths from women is the perfect place to start. The process of storytelling is a non-linear unravelling of one's lived experience, sense-making, and future planning (Woodiwiss et al., 2017). As we tell and deeply listen to our own

stories, we make greater sense of where we came from, who we are, and who we are evolving into. We have the space to travel with the elements of our story that feel important, especially when there is no one to judge right or wrong, true or untrue, good or bad, we are simply held and witnessed in our truths. This process and space, to me, are where clarity and insights emerge that may not have come forward in more rigid and structured interviews, offering a powerful depth to the stories told and the knowledges produced.

Critical theory proposes that stories do not spontaneously arise in the minds of individuals; they are socially created through and influenced by historical, socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022; Ravenek & Laliberte Rudman, 2013). This approach allows for an exploration of themes and patterns of meaning, illuminating the potential power relationships, social structures, and societal norms and expectations that influence one's relational meaning-making and shape reality. I use Gill's (2008) exploration of how "the social or cultural ''gets inside'', and transforms and reshapes our relationships to ourselves and others" (Gill, 2008, p. 433) as a foundation for a critical feminist approach to this project. This critical approach elucidates a path forward and promotes action for change and movement toward "social transformation, equity, and social justice" (Ravenek & Laliberte Rudman, 2013, p. 444). Through a critical narrative inquiry methodology rooted in a feminist and relational-process ontology approach, I aim to amplify the voices of women and explore how their relationship with rest is shaped by contemporary, androcentric western society, rather than merely extracting meaning from their stories.

The power of storytelling can be liberatory and empowering; it is a form of resistance and reclamation, supporting women to articulate their experiences in their own words and on their own terms, challenging societally dominant narratives (Pitre et al., 2013; Rainey & Call-Cummings, 2025). My responsibility, to each woman who shared her experience and the group collectively, is to weave the tapestry of their stories and recall their experiences without interfering or mistranslating (Fine, 2017; Salem, 2016). It is from here that we can better trouble and challenge the various factors, such as work, caregiving responsibilities, socioeconomics, and cultural expectations, that shape women's experience of rest. With modern western psychology so deeply rooted in individualism, relational-process ontology and storytelling support collective healing and solidarity, moving from individual pathology and responsibility to shared resilience and agency by coming back into ethical relationship (Braidotti, 2008; Pitre et al., 2013). These considerations, theories, and frameworks informed and

shaped how I designed the process of this research and engaged with the women who participated alongside me.

Research Design: Gathering Critical Stories

Connecting with Women

After gaining low-risk ethics approval by the Massey Human Ethics Committee (application ID: 400002983), women were recruited within Te Matua-a-Māui/Hawke's Bay, Aotearoa by trusted community intermediary contacts (intermediaries) whom I knew. This was done through purposeful snowball sampling, whereby intermediaries circulated the information sheet amongst women they felt fit the inclusion criteria – self-identifying as a woman, over 30 years old, and living in Te Matua-a-Māui/Hawke's Bay, Aotearoa – and would be interested in engaging in this topic. Women who were interested in talking about their experience of rest contacted me directly through email to respect their anonymity and confidentiality. Six women registered an interest in taking part and consented to engage with me in this study.

Once in contact with each woman, I let them know about the organic and fluid approach to these conversations and offered a choice of meeting in person or online to best suit their current circumstances. Regardless of their choice, I offered an invitation to choose a time and location that felt private and comfortable enough for them to speak freely – centring comfort and ease to potentially cultivate a moment of rest for our conversation to unfold.

Gathering Through Conversation

Each woman I spoke with was a middle-class, working New Zealander with children and varying family and life dynamics to navigate. Although this criterion was not required for selection, on reflection, it was to be expected given my own social locatedness and social networks within which my trusted intermediaries were selected. Consultation with a cultural advisor took place while designing the project, and she was available through the entire research process should I require her guidance. Five of the six women I spoke with work full time, while the sixth is currently taking a break from work after experiencing burnout.

Unsurprisingly, finding time to meet was the biggest obstacle for many of the women. An overwhelming work schedule amidst childcare and myriad other responsibilities meant making time

to talk about rest was very difficult. Many of the women reflected that this topic is important and needs to be brought forward, so they would make it happen. For some, that meant waiting until children were at school, blocking time in their calendar so nothing else could interfere, and for some, it meant children being present for some of the conversation. I intentionally kept my schedule flexible and open so that each woman could choose a time that best supported them; even within that, it was still challenging and for some, it took months to finally schedule something.

Each conversation took place online via Zoom. The audio was recorded and downloaded alongside the internal transcription. Audio and video recordings were all deleted upon completion of transcription. Until that time, the recordings were kept on a password-protected USB stick and kept in a locked drawer when not in use.

Contemplating Shared Stories

Relational and affirmative ethics guided my immersion in and analysis of these conversations individually and collectively. Affirmative ethics upholds and centres the dignity of each woman and respect for their lived experience by acknowledging and honouring their struggles and strengths without filtering or trying to translate their perspective. Waitere and Johnston (2009) guided my approach to active listening to deeply hear and understand what was being said. I held this intentional listening alongside Fine's (2017) reminder to ethically resist making a 'single story' the only story (Adichie as cited in Fine, 2017, p. 118) to bring forward what is shared in a meaningful and co-created tapestry of women's experiences of rest. To do this, I immersed myself in each individual conversation and moved to weave them together, along with my own situated experiences. Quotes are brought forward verbatim and storied within their own exploration or intertwined with similar dominant narratives from other women.

I also hold the understanding that "[h]uman beings are never singular even when alone, constituted by the internalised others of our social world" (Bradbury as cited in Fine, 2017, p. 119); while each woman shared their own experiences and meaning-making, they brought with them everyone within and around their contextual lived experiences. The bringing in of their complex and intricate web of social, cultural, and 'peopled' experiences helped me resist the "neoliberal insistence on the single story" (p. 119). This nuance and complexity encourage a broadening of our scope of understanding on a societal level without generalizing or making rest a universally understood

experience. Any interpretation and pondering brought forward is my own sense-making. I hope that by centring, listening to, and prioritizing women's voices, they feel truly heard and honoured in sharing their stories. From here, others may find a connection in shared experiences, recognizing the common threads that remind us of our collective journey.

Relational Ethics

Ethically, this journey was informed by Braidotti's (2008, 2010) affirmative relational ethics and Smythe and Murray's (2000) considerations for 'owning the story' in narrative research. By weaving these frameworks together, I hoped to hold each woman and their stories respectfully and bring them forward in a way that honours all of who they are and the context in which they make sense of and experience rest. I engaged with affirmative relational ethics to intentionally and respectfully align with a Te Tiriti-led approach; ethical considerations for this project were guided by the Universal and Te Tiriti o Waitangi Principles as presented in Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research (MUHEC) (Massey University, 2017). I used these resources as a moral compass alongside engaging in cultural supervision in the development and unfolding of this project to better work alongside the women who chose to engage with this co-created research. I constantly moved to centre partnership and collaboration to foster manaakitanga by referring to Te Ara Tika Guidelines (Hudson, 2010) throughout the process.

To support what Smythe and Murray (2000) refer to as process consent – checking in and negotiating consent throughout the entire process – each woman received the information sheet (see Appendix A) as well as the consent form (see Appendix B) to sign and return once they agreed to partake in the study (Smythe & Murray, 2000). This relational to and fro is at the heart of affirmative relational ethics, respecting that consent is not just a one-time thing and transparency and communication are crucial throughout every stage to ensure a truly collaborative experience.

The signed consent forms were collected via email and securely stored. Confidentiality and anonymity were further discussed before each conversation to cultivate a sense of comfort and ease before we began our conversations. While transcriptions were downloaded from Zoom, to ensure accuracy, I went through and edited each one while listening back to the audio. Pseudonyms were established during the editing and finalizing stage of transcription, and all identifying information was deleted. Smythe and Murray (2000) reminded me that conversations are intricately permeated with

distinguishing factors and often not only do participants recognize themselves in our writing but those who know them do as well. While Aotearoa is already a small world where the degree of separation seems to be zero, Te Matau-a-Māui/Hawke's Bay is even more so; everyone seems to know everyone. I took great care to remove all potential identifying markers – including place and type of work, family, friends and other peripheral aspects – while maintaining the integrity of what each woman shared. After transcriptions were completed, the audio was deleted.

Avoiding and decreasing harm was at the centre of all considerations as I moved through this experience. As highlighted by Smythe and Murray (2000), there will always be unforeseeable consequences, everything from feeling comfortable and sharing things they would not normally share to unpacking a topic or question that holds more emotional charge than anticipated. Within this, I used discernment and supervision to navigate what was brought forward while maintaining the integrity of this research and, most importantly, the dignity and mana of each woman. I endeavoured to keep the heart and essence of every shared conversation without jeopardizing identity or compromising their story by centring myself as the interpretive authority when publishing this work (Smythe & Murray, 2000). To further support this, each woman was offered the opportunity to read over the transcript and edit if desired to best encompass what they wanted to share. Once content with the transcriptions, an authority for release of transcript form (see Appendix C) was signed, returned, and protectively stored as stipulated in the Massey Code of Ethics.

Before each conversation, I reminded them that there was no structure or pre-determined direction for the questions and that it would be an organic, open conversation. I hoped to create a space where each woman felt comfortable and at ease to share their lived experience without feeling like they were being guided toward any one answer or outcome. I reminded them that I am right alongside them in the sense-making and unpacking of what rest means in today's world and there are no right or wrong answers. This helped me remain grounded in the collaborative nature of critical narrative research and centre the story and lived experience offered by each woman (Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022; Smythe & Murray, 2000). I know I have used – and sometimes continue to use – the very language, techniques, and frameworks I am troubling. I also know I have and continue to use language, techniques, and frameworks that perpetuate and cause harm that I am unaware of. I am constantly learning, unlearning, and becoming as I navigate this world from my own situated experience.

Smythe and Murray (2000) reminded me that narrative research can be complex and nuanced; researchers can run the risk of making meanings for participants in "quite different terms than the participants themselves" (p. 318) and the challenge lies in doing justice to both sets of perspectives. This is something I came up against as contradictions and confusing concepts were brought forward. Through reflexivity and supervision, I worked to respectfully bring forward the seemingly blatant contradictory narratives shared in a conversation while holding both as true for the woman who shared them – I hope to have done so with care and integrity.

Holding Myself Alongside – A Reflexive Practice

Braidotti (2008) reminded me how imperative a deep reflexive practice is, helping resist, reimagine, and transform the predominant self-serving and self-centred individualism within modern western psychology and engaging in a collaborative and relational approach to research. Reflexivity and bracketing of my preconceptions helped me engage in embodied listening without judgment to create a space for meaningful co-creation of knowledge that remains grounded in the reality of the women I am learning with. This was a crucial component as I explored how six western, middle-class women experience rest within the tensions of eurocentrism, patriarchy, and gender norms and expectations. Reflexivity encouraged me to critically examine my own position in relation to each woman – both in proximity to and distance from – and the broader systems of social power relations at play. My positionality inevitably shapes my interpretations, making continuous engagement in reflexivity throughout this research vital.

Journaling throughout this process has helped me unpack and more intricately explore and question what stories and narratives are my own and how I have, and continue to be, influenced by dominant societal narratives about what it means to be a socially constructed woman in western society. Free-form writing like this has helped me work through particular challenges and tensions while highlighting my own sense-making. Holding this within and alongside each conversation has helped me move through this process with compassion and care for myself and the women I spoke with. I have regularly engaged with my supervisor and actively worked to not filter or hold back my thoughts, noticings, and questions, so that I have someone reminding me to keep each woman and rest at the centre of this work.

Throughout the process of this research, I kept the conversation about rest alive in every aspect of my life. When asking colleagues, friends, family, and sometimes strangers, about their relationship with rest or what it means to them, so many of them met me with a look of confusion or a lighthearted roll of the eyes. One peer kindly offered with a chuckle, “Rest while working three jobs just to make ends meet while also caring for a family? Sure”. We then discussed the adage of putting your own oxygen mask on first; does the same logic not apply? For more and more women, the personal oxygen mask is not rest – it is survival (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023). While some work without rest out of necessity, others work out of fear of being deemed lazy and the guilt and shame associated with rest (Brosi & Gerpott, 2023).

These everyday interactions and discussions were essential during the initial and ongoing stages of preparing for and engaging in conversations with each woman who participated in this research. They helped me expand, however much, my horizon of situated understanding to become more aware of potential biases and elements I might not have considered otherwise. To ensure I was respecting each woman’s lived experience and context as best as I could, I considered and reconsidered how varied each perspective and experience of rest might be – from those who might centre and cherish it to those who do not think it is important or something that needs to be considered, and everything in between.

Women Giving (a Critical) Voice to Rest

In collaboration with each woman, I have “story[ed] [their] lives, relationships and experiences” (Hickson, 2016, p. 383) to give a critical voice to rest and women’s (in)ability to engage in and embody it. Through whole-body listening (Fine, 2017), transcribing, and immersing myself in each conversation – individually and collectively – I bring a cohesive narrative of how the concept and experience of rest has transformed over time and the problematic politics that render rest taboo at best and self-sacrificial at worst. By knitting together relational-process ontology, feminist standpoint theory and a blended critical narrative methodology, all grounded in affirmative relational ethics, this project holds rest as a multifaceted, politicized, and profoundly personal, embodied, and relational experience. This integrated methodological framework honours the complexity of each woman’s experience while keeping power and positionality visible throughout the process. Collaboratively, we are moving towards an understanding of what rest is, how it is felt and experienced, withheld and

cultivated, and, most importantly, remembered and reclaimed. These are the pebbles placed into our discursive waters so we can see how and where they dynamically and naturally ripple and move us fluidly through our conversation.

As I immersed myself in the analysis of the stories shared by each woman, I observed a striking distinction between the individual understanding of and engagement in meaningful rest and how embedded societal factors and culture have influenced and impacted access to time and rest. From this noticing, I chose to weave together the analysis and discussion elements over two chapters: chapter 4, *(Re)Defining Rest*, focuses on the individual and collective understanding and chapter 5, *Politics of Rest*, explores the societal and political influences on and implications of women's experiences of rest.

The key narratives within *(Re)Defining Rest* demonstrate how early experiences and expectations shaped by family, cultural norms, one's immediate social environment and how these have influenced each woman's understanding of and (in)ability to rest. Within this chapter, dominant narratives emerged from the entanglement of power dynamics, gender roles – both internalized and externally imposed – and broader societal expectations, leading to an exploration of overwhelm and burnout. From here, *The Politics of Rest* unpacks the structural and systemic barriers to rest, illustrating how rest is unequally distributed, policed, and politicized. This narrative invites deeper reflections on what a rest-rich future might entail, both individually and collectively.

The need to separate these two elements, the micro and the macro, into chapters reflects the depth and complexity of rest and women's (in)ability to engage in it. Through these insights, a third dominant narrative emerged: *Reclaiming, Becoming, and Feeling Rest,* exploring a shift toward reclaiming rest, re-centring personal worth, and recognizing rest not as a luxury, but as a necessity for sustainability and care. Each of these dominant narratives contains layers of complexity. To honour this nuance, sub-narratives are also presented within the analysis and discussion, offering further depth and differentiation.

4 – (Re)Defining Rest

This chapter is a contemplative unpacking and exploration of each woman's stories, insights, questions, and wisdom of an emergent and complex understanding of rest. While each interaction was unique, they all seemed to follow a similar path; conversations began with an initial unpacking of what rest means to each woman today and how they understand, navigate, and engage in it. From there, we naturally flowed toward the barriers, internal and external, they come up against when trying to become and feel rested. This led us to an exploration of why we relate to rest the way we do today, what a rested self and wider community might look and feel like, and where rest might take us. The analysis revealed several dominant narratives shared across participants' accounts, with each woman expressing similar themes in distinct but resonant language.

It was interesting, albeit unsurprising, to hear how – to this day – women are actively distanced, separated and removed from spaces and experiences of rest; rest that could inherently rejuvenate and fulfill us (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023). The kind of rest that nourishes us, so we can be more present within our relationships, our interactions, and in the ways we choose to move through the world (Ehrstein, 2022; Riley et al., 2019). Many of us know we need rest, know it is crucial to overall wellbeing, but are confused about what it *actually* means in the context of our modern society. When asked what rest means to her, Steph offered, "I don't know what the answer is…I do know that [rest] is really important", highlighting how confusing and convoluted the narratives around rest have become (Scripter, 2025).

Along a similar line, Carla shared that she appreciated "having a little space between the initial invite and [our conversation] to actually think about [rest] and to consider it". This acknowledgement of the depth and breadth of rest reflected the intricate complexities of how rest is understood, experienced, and accessed – or not. She reiterated, for me, how important it is to hear how this relational process of becoming rested is approached by women with respect to their unique perspectives. When beginning our conversation about rest, it was interesting to see each woman take, what appeared to me to be, a moment of pause while they contemplated and searched for what rest meant to them today. In those moments, I felt the importance of hearing from partial and situated lived experiences when exploring something as personal and contextually embedded as rest (Haraway, 1988; N. Harding, 2017); rest is felt, understood, performed and embodied differently for

each woman because she navigates her lived experience in a way that is best for her. In her own words, each woman unpacked how she has come to know what rest feels like to her now, having experienced deep exhaustion and, for some, burnout. As they shared what rest means to them today, there was a shared sense that rest is something that must be *felt*.

Rest is Felt – Becoming Rested

As each woman unpacked and explored what rest means to them, there appeared to be a moving away from intellectualizing rest toward an embodied experience of rest in the moment. Genuine, nourishing rest, for Tanya, is a "feeling of…soulful connection"; it is a "full body" experience where her "shoulders are down…breathing is slower…mind is soft". Vanessa shared a similar sentiment, describing rest as the "feeling of being...at peace and calm and having nothing pressing to do", even if "it's not often". For Vanessa, rejuvenating rest comes from getting "fresh air", going to the "gym", "baking", or "reading" because they "take you out of your own head". Vanessa shared how engaging in something "that is important to me", where "I can do exactly what I want", is her version of rest so that "I'm topped up and can enjoy my own life more". While this might, on the surface, look like a selfish proclamation, it was anything but; she reminded me that by engaging in uniquely meaningful rest for ourselves, we can become more present, enjoy time with others and get whatever we consider to be the most out of life (Scripter, 2025).

Within this exploration of rest as a felt-sense, there appeared to be a desire for rest to become more easily accessible so that it can be embodied regularly, rather than "have to be seeking out things [that restore us]" (Steph). This did not imply a wish for an 'easy' life. Instead, it seemed to suggest that by feeling rested, we could better navigate daily life and the inevitable stressors that arise, allowing us to cope with them more effectively and recover more quickly. Vanessa shared how more rest "would [help her] feel better physically, mentally, emotionally, just across the board better, and not feel like I've been hit by a truck". When asked how rest supports her, Tanya "was going to say tolerate, [but] that might be a strong word. [Feeling rested means] I can navigate my day in a way that doesn't make it feel like just putting one foot in front of the other. It's not a chore". Carla explained this as her having "more capacity to take on things that are unexpected". As I listened to each woman share what rest means to them, I noticed a sense of wanting to be more present and move through

life well – not simply go through the proverbial motions and 'do restful activities' out of desperation to 'top up'.

There was a shared knowing that the activity itself does not need to be inherently restful; for each woman, it was more about the *feeling* when engaging in the activity that determined whether it was rejuvenatingly restful or not. This resonated, on some level, with what Scripter (2025) observed: for something to be truly considered rest, it must be utterly and uniquely meaningful to the individual. Through the conversations with each woman who engaged in this project, I learned there is more to it than that; beyond being meaningful, rest must be *felt* and embodied. Naomi shared that, regardless of what others deem restful, she must "feel [rested] in my body". Tanya spoke about the importance of "tun[ing] in" to see what rest needs to be from moment-to-moment because it "might mean sleep, but rest might just mean a break…or an active type of rest like walking in nature, which can give me energy".

It felt very special to witness each woman light up when they spoke about "doing what I need…to…top up" (Tanya). Carla knows she has "to do what's right for me and my needs, desires, wants". Again, there was a sense that choosing what feels right for us is a crucial element in becoming rested. For Janelle, "if it's your choice, then that's your rest". It is less about the process of *doing* something restful and more about the embodied experience of *feeling* what is right for us in the moment. The essence of this was woven throughout each conversation as the women shared a common thread of rest being something that supports a feeling of peace, calm, and no pressure to do anything or be anyone – rest began to emerge as a possible way of embodied experience as we move through the world.

So Much More than Sleep: Embodying Rest in the Moment

It came as no surprise that sleep was mentioned in almost every conversation as a form of rest. Interestingly, it was not the highest-rated or most appreciated form of rest; sleep was observed more as a taken-for-granted form of rest and as a human necessity than a meaningful way to recharge and rejuvenate. Naomi shared that rest is "potentially the seven hours…where I sleep. I…I don't really have a rest, I don't think". Carla's "initial thought is uninterrupted sleep", then expressed, "that's not always possible" so rest is more about "what can you do to have a break?" For Carla, this means a break from "being productive" and being present with the moment; rest is now more "about

connection [with self and others]". Carla shared that "going out in nature and walking the dog…is rest away from the demands". While there was shared confusion among us to start, the emerging understanding was rest is what makes us feel good – and it involves much more than just sleep.

Even for Tanya, who shared that "there's not enough sleep, not enough hours, I could sleep forever", also stated that her morning routine is what best sets her up for the day – not sleep. She acknowledged that it is "a little ironic" that she has "started to set my alarm earlier" for her "morning [routine] so that even though I wake up and feel that I haven't had enough sleep…I can sit [with my morning ritual] and slowly wake up". She "feel[s] that's a better start than an extra hour in bed [sleeping]". This morning ritual fuels her and cultivates her capacity to move through the world and navigate whatever comes her way in a way that feels best and most "connected to myself" (Tanya). Carla shared that "exercise" makes her feel really good and energized and she enjoys "connecting with people [at the gym] outside of home".

Tanya added even more nuance to sleep by explaining "there's a difference between 'I'm going to have a sleep', and...'I'm just going to have a sleep because I've been there for you all, I'm tired'. That's also rest [but] comes from a different place. It's grumpy rest". Scripter (2025) agrees that the intention behind *why* we engage in a restful activity is important, "rest is attitude-dependent" (p. 5) and how we approach the activity matters. Resting, or "going for a sleep" in Tanya's example, because we are grumpy and resentful of showing up for everyone else will not restore and rejuvenate her, whereas sleep purely to nourish and top up because she wants to will. Rest, more than anything else, appears to be a break from imposed pressure, expectations, and demands. This unpacking of different approaches to sleep and rest made me reflect more deeply on the profound understanding that *why and how* we approach and engage in rest matters.

Why and How – You Can't Have One Without the Other

Unpacking how they rested helped each woman make more sense of what rest genuinely is for them today; *how* they engaged in an activity or experience is as important, if not more for some, than *why*. Naomi illuminated this nuance when she described the difference between hanging out with the same friend; if a friend "rang and said, 'Do you want to go for a wine?' I would say, 'No, thank you', because that's not what I enjoy doing. But I'd happily go for a walk with you". While the connection to and with the other person is important, *how* they connect matters; going out for a wine

feels draining and “I would get so much more [from a walk]. I don't want to sit[,] sitting around doesn't do anything for me” (Naomi).

Vanessa brought this closer to home by reflecting on doing an activity alone compared to with her children. She shared how baking is something she deeply enjoys, and it used to be a source of creativity and nourishment. However, when the “[kids] want to join in[,] that…doubles my stress levels”. Something that can be a source of joy and fuel for us must be engaged with in a uniquely meaningful way, the intention behind the (in)activity matters, or else it depletes and drains an already taxed system. Vanessa also explained how some people “often confuse time on [our] phone as rest, and I am so guilty of that”. She shared how she will “just go on my phone. I'll just start watching videos or I'll scroll. And it has added nothing to my life, and I know that I shouldn't do it”.

Carla shared something similar when describing how she would spend “hours…just looking at these things [on her phone], all these influences and it's like...No, cut that off’”. She reflected on her process of “rather than comparing and being like, ‘oh, well, they're doing that, so I should’…It's [more about] what's right for me, for [our family]?” While our phone and other technology can be useful, *how* we use and engage with them is important; they can be beneficial or can leave us feeling more exhausted and self-surveilled by comparing our lives to the curated lives of those on social media (Ekinci et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2024) – perpetuating women’s unrest through the dominant narrative of ‘not good enough’.

Understanding Rest Through Experiences of (Un)Rest

As each woman shared her understanding of what meaningful rest is to her now, they often began by articulating what rest is *not*. In the sense-making of what rest means, there was a teasing apart of rest and unrest, which quickly moved the conversation toward what was exhausting them and the barriers they faced when trying to become rested. Each woman spoke with such conviction when she described *knowing* how important rest is to her. She knows it because she has felt it. She has also – unfortunately, more often than not – felt bone-deep exhaustion and unrest.

Naomi shared her “many, many moments of [burning the] candle at both ends”, which means she experiences being “run down…unable to move, unable to talk, panic attack, anxiety, anything like that”. Steph shared her experiences of “fatigue, burnout, mental exhaustion” and knowing something had to change for her to be rested and well again. Naomi reflected on having to learn to “give [herself]

permission" to do what she needs to support herself. With chronic fatigue and other chronic health issues that are "apparently [caused by] chronic stress" and "high cortisol levels", Janelle is "always exhausted" and sometimes "literally can't put another foot in front of the other".

Vanessa shared how she knows she is not rested because she *feels* it – "under [my] eyes just get so dark, [and] my skin feels stretched and...my coffee consumption triples…I feel like my heart's beating all the time and I just get super snappy". Vanessa reflected on how "the extended periods of stress and no sleep and poor diet…must just be shaving off years of my life". She shared the changes she has made to reclaim her health and wellbeing; she now "prioritizes experiences" and focuses on what is most important to her and her family. Carla shared that when she is "tired or I haven't had enough rest, I'm very short. I go really inward in my brain, and…I'm thinking a lot, but I'm not communicating with anybody". She noted how if "something happens" when she is "really, really, really tired" and "grumpy", she just "[does not] have the capacity for it". She shared how she also reprioritized what is most important to her and her family so they can "be[ ] healthy and happy…and enjoy life while we can".

These experiences of unrest permeated our conversations and were a foundation for sense-making as we continued to unpack meaningful rest and how important it is for women in today's world. "There's a wisdom now that I didn't have before", Tanya shared as she offered her insights that arose from being unwell and unrested throughout her life. She reflected on how going "through…grief and that unsettled time" moved her towards tools, practices, and experiences that helped restore her in ways she would not have come across otherwise; this wisdom stemmed from experiencing profound exhaustion and "never [being] at the top of the [priority] list". Carla shared a similar learning from moments of exhaustion and realizing she needed to reprioritize because, for her, "it's about being able to…roll with things a little bit more". She knows this because she has experienced the opposite; "those couple of years when I really had very diminished sleep and rest [because of young kids], you're in total survival mode and not really thriving, loving life. Loving bits of it but not feeling fully well-rounded and happy and complete". From this experience, Carla learned that "when I'm well rested, I'm more optimistic. I've got more capacity to take on things that are unexpected".

As I listened to these descriptions of unrest, there was a visceral reminder of the moments where I too have felt like a 'docile body', exhausted and doing whatever I could to get through the

moment. These experiences of deep unrest offered many women, me included, an embodied comparison point that helped move us toward becoming rested. There was a shared reflection that, to experience moments of *feeling* rested, both fleeting and lingering, we must know what it feels like on a cellular level. When Tanya shared how she "never knew what [rest] felt like [but] I knew what tired felt like", I reflected on just how societally embedded exhaustion has become and how purposeful this may be. If women do not get the opportunity to pause and feel rested, they will never desire it or seek it out, and that is a win for androcentric neoliberal productivity. Society benefits from convincing women that this is the ways things are by ensuring it is the way it always has been – exhaustion is so normalized because it has permeated our situated contexts of generations, making it increasingly harder to question.

Becoming (Un)Rested – I Got it From My Parents

When asked what influenced their perception of rest, or how they came to relate to rest in the way they do, often the first and primary element identified was parents or family. This narrative was strong for each of the women I spoke with. Each woman reflected on how their parents rarely, if ever, engaged in rest, and so they knew no different – this points to how conditioning can be inherited through persistent culturally and systemically embedded societal norms, gender roles, power dynamics, and expectations (Ahmad, 2023; Gilligan, 1977; Ussher, 2023). Steph noted how her "dad worked really hard" and how this influenced her work ethic and how she relates being busy to being successful. Tanya "learn[s] a lot in relationship" and reflected on, "how I was raised in the family that I came from". This acknowledgement of meaning emerging through relational process underscores the formative role of early relational contexts; understandings of rest are not only learned by but also regulated through interpersonal and family dynamics that are shaped by broader social norms (Liu et al., 2022; Osher et al., 2020; Valdez et al., 2013). Since family life is built on a bedrock of explicit and implicit beliefs, roles and expectations, and traditions and routine, these forces become the banks of the river for each person's lived experience and sense of self, shaping and moulding the emerging adult and the water they swim in (Valdez et al., 2013).

The influence of this formative power is increasingly salient for people who experience family stress or collectively navigate a crisis as a family; those who experienced adversity as a child are more likely to internalize tendencies of parentification, a perceived responsibility to care for others (Valdez et al., 2013) – laying the path toward the 'good woman' and potentially 'good mother'. Vanessa "grew

up with a single mother [and they were] quite poor" and she "worked from…a really young age". For her, this means she "get[s] that value of money" and now prioritizes time, energy, and money in ways that best reflect her situated context. Naomi shared, "I work as hard as I do, one, because that's what my parents did. Two, my husband is a really hard worker" – it is all she has ever known. Naomi's "parents were very hard workers…and we grew up with next to nothing". This means she knew "from a very early age that I never wanted to have children in that same situation".

Naomi's observation highlights how one's relationship with rest can be shaped by and because of our parents – or despite them – no matter how much we may love and care for them. It also demonstrates how we can perpetuate or disrupt the cycle for how we and the next generation navigate the world and our relationship with becoming rested within their own context. Naomi grappled with the tension between wanting the best for her children and not "want[ing] to project [her beliefs and values] on[to them]". Naomi had to "deal with a lot of adult issues at a really young age", and this has influenced her relationship with herself, others, and how she navigates societal norms and expectations as a woman. We are born into the situated context of our parents and this influences and shapes how we move through the world. Since we learn how to navigate and negotiate society from our parents, we are learning from what they learned from their parents. Naomi not only learned from her parents but her "grandparents as well". These emergent, relational learnings from generational entanglements deeply – implicitly and explicitly – shape, influence, and guide our relationship to productivity, time, and rest.

We Also Got it From Society

Steph expressed that it is "largely the society…we live in" that dictates our relationship with ourselves, others, and productivity over everything – especially becoming rested. She went on to reflect on how society now is "just so busy" and there is a constant coercive drive to "keep up with the neighbours" so we are seen and perceived to be successful (Rosa, 2003). Janelle expressed a similar understanding, sharing the "expectation that if you work hard, then you're successful". The need to perform and self-discipline under the dominant patriarchal gaze (Bartky, 1998) leads many women to self-silence (Ussher, 2010) for the sake of appearances and to perform the 'good woman'. Carla shared her need to disrupt this constant demand; "rest is like a reset" and a break from "that feeling of needing to do stuff all the time and being productive". This rest in the form of a break from productivity highlights the dominant neoliberal narrative that output is paramount (Barnett &

Bagshaw, 2020; Card & Hepburn, 2023), and to earn a break, women must achieve everything that everyone else has put on their to-do list (Ehrstein, 2022).

As western society has shifted the conceptualization of rest, I can see how so many women have shared that resting feels synonymous with being inherently lazy and makes them feel guilty, contributing to them burning the candle at both ends. Driven by this seemingly inherent need to be productive and busy, each woman shared some of the ways they have been impacted by the internalization of the neoliberal capitalist belief that has led to rest being considered shameful, lazy, and unnecessary (Brosi & Gerpott, 2023; Gill, 2007) – often to the detriment and sacrifice of their overall health and wellbeing. These reflections reminded me of imposed need to meet the 'perfectibility of man' (Braidotti, 1998) and if we become exhausted and depleted in the process, that is because we are inferior and deficient (Bartky, 1998; Gilligan, 1977) – a deficiency that can be solved by engaging in commodified 'self-care'. Yet, society's current iteration of neoliberal capitalized self-care is another way for women to self-discipline through self-surveillance – and we often cannot even get that right under the dominant gaze.

When talking about what restful activities are, Naomi reflected on how challenging it is to know what rest means for us in the context of our situated lived experience today. She shared how there is "so much [societal] pressure of…where's your time, [Naomi]? [W]hat do you do for you?" From here, she shared how, if she were to engage in what she considers society to deem to be restful – "sleeping until 12" or "sitting on the couch, not doing much" – she would "absolutely lose [her] mind". This tension between "what society says rest is for me" (Naomi) and what actually feels restful is an element all women grappled with. This conflict had me wondering how women are ever meant to become rested when even 'self-care' is policed by self and others.

In Naomi's sense-making of what rest genuinely means to her, she reflected on she "think[s] rest is just sitting on the couch, like not doing much and looking at the sun and…that's [what society and social media show me, but]…it's just not who I am". This grappling reveals how societal or inherited ideas of rest can create confusion – if we don't align with those images, we might question whether we're truly resting at all – "So, then I think, I don't actually understand what rest is," Naomi continued. Rest, then, is not only something we do, but also something we come to know, pursue, and sometimes, doubt.

Tanya reflected on how she always thought “tired equals sleep. If you were tired, you needed more sleep, it didn't mean that you could take some time for yourself. How would that be perceived?” How resting is perceived by others has a profound impact on how we relate to and engage in rest. This impacts on women much differently because of the added layers of disciplinary power and performativity so we can try and move through this world safely (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Ussher, 2010). Janelle shared how she “feel[s] guilty when I'm not doing something and [my partner] sees me…having a moment”. This regulation of one’s own behaviour under the imposed gaze and judgement of others is particularly pronounced for women – it is often gendered and moralized, perpetuating women’s tendency to self-silence and self-discipline through self-surveillance (Bartky, 1998; Gill, 2007).

I Feel the Judgement: Policing Self Through the Gaze of Others

Bartky (1998) found that women are subject to gendered disciplinary practices that compel us to attend to every aspect of our being – appearance, speech, emotional expression (or lack thereof) – to present ourselves in line with normative femininity. Is genuine and meaningful rest possible when women cannot escape the disciplinary gaze, both external and internal? As we unpacked moments of rest, Tanya reflected on how she “can find pockets of [rest], and then someone comes home and I'm like, damn. I can still do it. But it's...maybe a little distracting”. I have felt something similar when I am engaging in something that feels restful and am unexpectedly interrupted by another person; I notice myself reflecting on how I must have been perceived in that moment, and the feeling of rest is quickly replaced by a feeling of being judged.

Naomi expressed how she “feel[s] the judgment [from others]” because her version of rest is not the same as what “society says rest is”. The dominant gaze dictates, constrains, and polices rest, making it anything but restful for many women. Vanessa referred to this as a “feeling of…secret guilt where I will feel good, but I'll feel bad about feeling good. Which is ridiculous” – and absolutely valid. She has found that her perceived judgement from others can taint the good feelings that come after doing something uniquely restful to the point where she does not “tell anybody that [I am resting]”. As suggested by Gilligan (1977) and further supported by Gill (2008) and Ussher (2023), women have learned to judge themselves based on how internalized social and cultural norms transform and reshape our relationship with ourselves and others. Women have inherently learned to police

themselves by the gendered and societal norms and expectations embedded within their public and private domains.

In women's learning to judge and police themselves, there is a comparison point between self and others that is important to further unpack. When exploring how she came to understand rest and how she engages with it, Steph mused, "if you see someone lying on a deck chair on their front lawn reading a magazine it's like, look at you…silver spoon in your mouth kind of thing[. I]s it some kind of reverse snobbery? I don't know". This made me think about how we might project our own internalized guilt onto others because, over time, we have made such disciplinary power our own – policing not just self but other women. We not only worry about what others will think of us if we are seen to relax and rest, we perpetuate the narrative by policing others. When we judge others, we are holding them to an arbitrary, socially constructed standard that we have inherited from patriarchal, late-capitalist, colonized ideologies; the same standards we use to judge ourselves. Gill (2007) explores how this self-propelling cycle of judgement results in constant self-discipline through self-surveillance, where even rest or authenticity can feel performative and potentially risky, shaped by the ever-present disciplinary pressure to be agreeable, productive, composed, and nurturing.

Vanessa shared her epiphany when she reprioritized a moment of rest and connection over the fear that "if…a friend comes over [to a messy home], I'm going to be judged". For her, "if somebody says they're coming over, I'm like, 'Right, I've got two hours of high-pressure, high-octane cleaning, to get my house to public-facing level". Vanessa "definitely feel[s] that pressure" and now would rather go out and connect with people than stress herself out cleaning to their perceived and imposed standards. By reclaiming and reprioritizing her and her family's wellbeing over the expectations and policing of others, she is resisting disciplinary powers (Bartky, 1998). Within these tightly woven entanglements of self and other, it becomes hard to tease out what we do for our own genuine happiness and wellbeing and what we do because we think it is expected and required of us to uphold our status of 'good woman' (Kamyab & Hoseinzadeh, 2023; Ussher, 2023).

Whether it is us keeping up with a busy, active "workaholic husband" (Naomi) or "keeping up with the neighbours" (Steph), there always seems to be something pushing us to perform gendered norms and expectations, "be on duty all the time" (Steph), and self-discipline under the dominant patriarchal gaze (Bartky, 1998) and self-surveillance (Gill, 2008). This exhaustion from being always

'on' has contributed to a necessary desire and need to take a break from other people. The imposed gendered power dynamics, alongside Gill's (2007) notion of self-discipline through self-surveillance, help make sense of why rest is increasingly a solitary endeavour for many women; solo rest has become something that tops us up to navigate and get through daily life and its many entangled interactions.

Peopled Out – A Break from Surveillance

In every one of the conversations, I noticed a focus on rest as an individual, solitary venture; relational ways to rest were scarcely mentioned. Janelle has learned that she "need[s] silence and by-myself-time to be able to get rest and just to stop". Naomi reflected on how her "husband will be like, 'we can do that together and have some time out'. And I'm like…we could. That'd be lovely, but not really. It's not lovely for me". Janelle also grappled with this tension as she explained how her and her partner have "very different views" on "how our weekends should look" as they have "very different views on…rest and all that sort of stuff". At first, I wondered if there was a loneliness within the ever-present need to top up and rest in solitude. Through the careful picking of threads within each conversation and my own similar experiences, I came to understand that many women do not feel like we can fully unmask and be our true, whole selves while around others.

While on the surface, there seemed to be a lack of depth and vulnerability in relationships where it does not feel restful being with and near a loved one – needing a break so we can then put up with life and others' demands again – there is more to it. For some, this inability to fully unmask stems from a fear of judgment – both real and anticipated. For others, it reflects the exhaustion of being constantly 'on' in social interactions, attuned to how they are perceived and managing themselves accordingly (Bartky, 1998; Gill, 2007). There is very limited, if any, time and space for unconditional, unmasked *being* (Hörberg et al., 2020). While women might resist disciplinary power in myriad ways (Bartky, 1998), if it has been our dominant disciplinary gaze for generations, it is no wonder many of us cannot unmask even with those we love most.

Working alongside Kamyab and Hoseinzadeh (2023), it is not simply or solely a lack of vulnerability that prevents women from unmasking and dropping their armour with loved ones; it is also the inability to disentangle from the internalized pressure of societal norms and expectations. Kamyab and Hoseinzadeh (2023) found that societal expectations have a profound influence on not

only women's psychological wellbeing but also their personal choices. If women are raised in the confines of gender roles and stereotypes, the level to which the 'good woman' is ingrained and upheld, by what Ussher (2010) refers to as women's tendency to self-silence, is extraordinary. To self-silence is what Tanya referred to as being a "people pleaser". Consequently, even in moments of safety and vulnerability with a loved one, the ability to fully rest is out of reach; women might be wondering if their loved one is truly enjoying themselves. Tanya reflected on how "connect[ing] with a friend…it's [still] considering someone else's needs as well as my own", showing how social entanglements and the complex inter- and intrapersonal dynamics (Barad, 2007) of rest need to be more deeply considered.

Tanya shared that she "would have thought that I was a real extrovert. But I actually don't think that I am, or things may have changed". Carla expressed something similar, "I'll feel drained because I've been around people [and] 'on' the whole time. My brain's been…in work mode". In their shared sense-making of the differences between solo time and connecting with others, there is an important thread to follow. Research has long shown the importance of social connections and relationships on our physical and mental health, overall wellbeing, and longevity (Jordan, 2023; Martino et al., 2015; Supianto, 2025). Yet, each woman referred, in her own way, to hitting the point of being 'peopled out' because of how much they give to and do for others. I think here about the intention behind connecting, as Naomi reminded us (see *Why and How – You Can't Have One Without the Other*), *how* people connect – the intention behind it – is as, if not more, important than connecting for the sake of connecting.

When explaining her need and desire for solo time over social connections, Steph explored how "it isn't any wonder that we need alone time", while also contemplating if it is "normal and natural…is it right that we need alone time so much?" Within her sense-making, she reflected on how humans come from tribal ways of living and being in community; as the adage goes, *it takes a village*. Social connection and support are key markers for increased health and longevity (Shankar, 2023; Shiovitz-Ezra & Rozen, 2024). This tension of being part of the village and needing to take care of self is apparent for Janelle as well; she expressed the importance of taking time to "disconnect from the world [and] rejuvenate yourself". This is significant because, as Janelle has found, "being a woman and a mum, you [are] the person that's organizing everything for everyone else and then there's time when…it's too much and…my brain needs to stop for a while".

This pressure to do everything for everyone all of the time, while simultaneously depleting her limited energy and capacity (Ehrstein, 2022; Locke, 2023), is exacerbated by the disciplinary gaze (Bartky, 1998) that pushes her to do more; this is simultaneously further complicated when we cannot rest fully because of the self-discipline to keep showing up for everyone else (Gill, 2007). I wonder if moving toward a relational, communal form of care – rather than the western individualized approach to 'self-care' (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Lax et al., 2023) – might invite more space to be rested and well? Women already have enough to manage, negotiate and navigate on their own; this would require a societal reimagining of and shifting in gendered power dynamics and androcentric societal norms and expectations – especially when it comes to the domains of work and home and who performs what role(s).

If I Don't Do It, No One Will – Taking Care of Everyone Else

Janelle, like so many women, works full-time in the public domain and a second shift at home in the private domain (Gilligan, 1977); this involves "all the school stuff and [helping with the children's] learning and everything". She considers all these tasks "like a full-time job as well". Steph noticed this pressure as an "isolated…young mum", she took on every role for everyone in her immediate family without the support of others – all while working full-time. As Janelle rattled off her list of highly demanding and complex commitments, roles, and responsibilities, we joked that she is the CEO, CFO, personal and executive assistant, HR, supervisor, and project manager for everyone and everything in her life; "if I don't do it, there's no fairy that's going to come in and do it for me".

Tanya reflected on how, being a mother meant "what everyone else needed would dictate what was required". She often found herself "trying to do everything". This obligation to do everything for everyone led to an exhaustion that "is just not healthy…not healthy for self. And, actually, for everyone else as well". Tanya reflected on how this constant depletion of self for the benefit of everyone else, and "doing things that I didn't want to do", "led to resentment [that] led to…things happening in my body that weren't healthy". For Janelle, there "always seems to be something on my to-do list[,] I'm the person that sorts…all those little things that…the rest of the family don't have any clue about". Janelle "[doesn't] enjoy being that busy" as "I've got chronic fatigue and things. So, that's definitely not something that I need". I resonated deeply with this shared experince of knowing that

being of ceaseless service to everyone else is exhausting and harms body and mind, and yet, if “I don’t do it, who will?” (Janelle).

For so many women, daring to even think about a moment of rest is unfathomable, because, who has the time? Janelle spoke to the mental load of tracking, managing, and doing everything for everyone and how, while this is exhausting, it is easier than asking for help from others. Vanessa supported this by sharing how “the mental load…is just crippling”. The mental labour involved in tracking what needs to be done, as well as how and by when, is already taxing enough; to try to ask someone for help involves the need to explain these details, leading many women to often just do it themselves because it feels easier and quicker (Reich-Stiebert et al., 2023). Reich-Stiebert et al. (2023) refer to mental labour – or mental load – as “an inherent cognitive component of daily routines primarily related to domestic or childcare tasks” (p. 475), or the unpaid work associated with the private domain of women.

Vanessa reflected on how “family [and] young kids” are a key barrier to her engaging in meaningful, generative rest. She shared her mental labour of having to consider things like, “lunch boxes for tomorrow…and then we have to pack their togs…then there'll be school photos in two weeks. Have they got enough clothes to wear? Do I need to buy socks?” It is no wonder that with “all those things turning through your head…you don't get a mental rest very often”. Janelle referred to this overwhelm as “brain fried” from trying to do it all. Throughout this exploration, I have come to believe that women have long been moulded, conditioned, and positioned for what Janelle described as “just…how life has worked out” (Bartky, 1998; Gilligan, 1977; Robnett & Vierra, 2023) – refering to the non-stop demands and expectations placed on women. Janelle is “the one that does all [the tasks]. I'm the person, the go-to person for everyone in the family and…there doesn't seem to be any time to rest”.

Vanessa expressed that rest does not happen until “I have more free time”, like at the “end of a [work] project”, for example. It is only then that she can “look up [and] pop out of the fog [of exhaustion and burnout]”. When she has time and space from imposed demands and expectations within the public and private domains, she can “go to the gym and I'll eat a bit better and I'll detox from coffee” because, for the moment, she does not have to “surviv[e] on caffeine…and sugar” to get through it all. I was reminded of Asp’s (2015) suggestion that, by moving with the “rhythm between

the states of non-rest and rest" (Asp, 2015, p. 4), we can still achieve and be productive, but from a rested and connected state of wellbeing; if women are increasingly time-poor, while simultaneously held the standard of androcentric output and productivity, is this ebb and flow possible for women today?

Carla expressed how it is her "my own internal…demands on myself to be productive [that interefer with feeling rested]. And being like, 'well, I've got to get stuff done and I need to be ahead and I need to prepare and I need to [finish] my to-do list". She reflected on having to teach herself "that the to-do list is never ending…it's going to keep going on. You're never going to get to the bottom of it". Because the list "just keeps rolling…you either pick the…top things and build rest in as a priority or you just keep going down the path of burn out" (Carla). This conflicting narrative of 'either or' was a common insight among the women – either we perform perfectly and achieve everything *or* we can feel rested; with everything women must navigate and negotiate, I understand, and have experienced, this give-or-take.

When Janelle shared that "rest is taking time to do something that you choose to do", this gave me pause. The very notion that women must actively '*take* time' to rest is inherently problematic – not only does performing a restful activity already require some level of effort, but the additional labour needed to, first, find time, but then to 'take' it is another task added to an already full to-do list. These matters of the private domain – family, nurturing and caring for others, and the third shift of emotional labour (Krstić et al., 2025) – are often invisible because they are taken for granted by those who do not perform them. The narrative that women need to actively try and take time to rest shows how societally embedded and systemic women's exhaustion has become – and how next to impossible it is when "we're so busy we have to carve out these pockets of time" (Steph) – but where do women find these moments of pause?

Maybe I'll Rest After My Second or Third Shift

Vanessa reflected on how typically a "day off [is seen as] your relaxation day, but it's actually the busiest day of the week"; she still feels like she "needs to be completely on [and] doing every single thing". While reflecting on something similar, Janelle wondered "why it seems to [only] fall on the woman's shoulders"; "[m]y partner's probably one of the better ones. [H]e works from home…he has dinner cooked by the time I get home". She shared how her partner "always work[s] his ass off"

but “after dinner, he's done” because “[h]is tick-list is done” and now he “can sit on the couch and watch TV”. Whereas for Janelle, “I've still got to do the washing, get my [child] in the shower, into bed, I do the dishes as well because he's cooked dinner. She wondered, “Why am I still doing all this stuff and you get to relax?” She has come to believe, “maybe it's just a man thing that they just do not get that there's not a fairy that comes in and does all the stuff. It's the woman that does it”.

Tanya wove in similar threads of commitments and others needs and wants taking precedence because it is “always tricky when you’re navigating a family” and “never at the top of the list of needs, which is a real shame”. For her, there were “always more urgent…demanding needs. People to be fed, children to get to where they needed to be [and] working”. She shared that “work commitments and family commitments are barriers [to rest]” and it was always a matter of “looking after others’ needs”. This pressure does not stop at the boundaries of family; colleagues, friends, acquaintances, our pets, and even strangers, all require – deservingly or not – care and consideration.

Tanya shared that for her there “is certainly a difference between connecting with a friend or a partner and being on my own”; time alone is “whatever I want. I don't have to consider anyone else. I don't have to navigate a conversation. It's all about me”, whereas “if I connect with a friend…it's considering someone else”. There is still effort here, potentially an inability to be fully oneself and strip back all the layers, masks, roles, responsibilities, external demands, and expectations and simply *be.* After all, as Tanya stated, connecting with people “[is] still work”. Within the meaning-making and redefining of rest in the context of their daily life, I noticed each woman navigate the tension and balance between unrest and rest, effort and effortless, meaningless and meaningful as they moved toward what genuine rest means within their situated context.

When it comes to resting and recovering from this ceaseless imposed exhaustion and crushing responsibility, nothing is more important to Vanessa than time for herself; she does not want “a present”, she would much prefer “a hotel room and I'll have 24 hours to talk to nobody…cook nothing…wash nothing and just have 24 hours for myself…where I do exactly what I want”. The expectation that women must navigate and negotiate both the male-centric public and female-centric private domains (Gilligan, 1977), take care of and support self and other (Lax et al., 2023; Locke, 2023), and perform contemporary societal and cultural norms flawlessly (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Robnett &

Vierra, 2023) exacerbates fatigue and yet does not warrant rest – upholding and perpetuating the narrative that docile bodies are here to be exploited and exhausted (Bartky, 1998).

Just Kidding, Rest is Only for the Physical

There is a dominant cultural narrative that rest is earned through physical exhaustion, which, of course, is often associated with labour-intensive roles traditionally occupied by men in the public domain, and now, according to Arts et al. (2022), 'progressive' women as well. Steph notes how during her "whole upbringing, my dad worked really hard". This narrative frames rest as a reward for bodily depletion, implicitly devaluing mental and emotional exertion, which are more frequently part of women's everyday lives (Krstić et al., 2025). In this framing, mental fatigue becomes invisible, unworthy of recognition, let alone recovery. Janelle pointed out how "[j]ust because I've done this many things on a list doesn't mean I get to sit down [and rest] now…because it's not going to get done if I don't do it".

Steph reflected on how difficult it has been to challenge this: "[m]y fatigue is mental," she shared, "my brain does not stop," and "rest is not just physical rest, is it? It's allowing your brain to stop. And that's been my lifelong journey…I still can't do it". Vanessa added, "the mental load…you must hear that [phrase] so so much doing this…is just crippling" and restful activities, for Vanessa, need to be ones that "take you out of your own head". These accounts point to a form of silencing that occurs when rest is narrowly defined – where women's need for restoration is minimized, and their lived experiences are delegitimized. It is not simply that mental exhaustion is overlooked, but that the gendered structure of what counts as rest actively excludes and invalidates the kinds of labour women often carry, leading to women experiencing disproportionate levels of 'mental health problems' and other pathologizations (Ussher, 2023).

To Rest or Not to Rest – Pathologizing and Moralizing

With chronic fatigue and other chronic health issues that are "apparently [caused by] chronic stress" and "high cortisol levels", Janelle shared how she is "always exhausted" and sometimes "literally can't put [one] foot in front of the other". Doctors have told her, "I don't know what's wrong with you, so do you want me to refer you to the hospital, or what specialist do you want me to send you to?" She joked, "you're giving me another job when I've just told you how not well I am? That's your job. Call me a GP as well, I guess". This decontextualized individualistic approach places the

burden and responsibility onto and within the socially constructed unwell woman– reinforcing individualism and victim-blaming while pathologizing women for having an understandable response to unrealistically androcentric societal expectations.

Research by Golmohamadi and Graham (2025) reported how women continue to be twice as likely to experience fatigue and are three to seven times more likely to experience chronic fatigue, and suggested this is partly driven by 'sex differences'. The authors posit "women use more maladaptive emotion regulation strategies like repetitive negative thinking" (Golmohamadi & Graham, 2025, p. 2), suggesting women simply need to cope better –to cope more like men. This reminded me of how our 'docile bodies' (Bartky, 1998) are constantly measured against Braidotti's (1998) 'perfectibility of man'. While Golmohamadi and Graham (2025) allude to other potential factors, the focus remained on biological reasons for experiencing stress differently. Janelle being told by her doctor to "go for a walk" and "get some rest", without hearing the full and very, complex and busy context of her lived experience, is an example of how western deficit-focused health models perpetuate the narratives that are keeping women marginalized, silenced, and burned out (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Fullagar & O'Brien, 2014; Ussher, 2023).

The need for rejuvenating rest was not considered important to Steph "until I became a mum" and "I really, really struggled". Steph shared how she had to learn how to be everything for everyone while navigating "trouble sleeping" and sometimes "only getting two hours of sleep a night". She reflected on feeling "isolated as a young mum" and being "terrified about being tired and being a parent". When Steph shared "I tried everything", I was struck by how 'everything' was all internally-focused interventions and therapies – no medical professional or therapeutic support person she worked with asked about the context of her life, wondered how she was doing as a young mum and what support she might need. When prescribed medication to help with sleep, Steph grappled with the tension of wanting to support herself 'naturally' and knowing she needed to get quality sleep so she could function. This tension between 'natural' and medicinal support is something I have also experienced; the pathologization of women has led to 'mis'-diagnosis and over-prescribing women for decades (Short & Zacher, 2022; Ussher, 2023), leaving many of us wary of being pathologized and wrongly medicated.

Overtime, and a lot of titrating on and off different medications, I have come to learn that medicinal support can be very helpful and necessary at times. Steph shared a similar learning by explaining her "on-and-off relationship" with sleep aids. I bring this forward as a reminder that, in the troubling of pathologizing, centring and honouring situated knowledge is crucial so we do not negate, minimize, or devalue someone's lived experience and what best supports them to navigate and negotiate contemporary society. To make medication and pathology completely wrong would be to participate in another form of erasure – replacing one dominant narrative with another, one that pathologizes normal responses to lived experiences of systemic pressures as individual weaknesses. It risks silencing the women for whom medication has been a lifeline, or whose experiences do not fit neatly into non-pathologizing frameworks. Holding space for complexity means we can critique harmful systems while still respecting the contextual, diverse, and emerging ways women navigate their health, safety, and survival.

Pathologizing 'Good Woman' as 'People-Pleaser'

By reflexively unpacking my relationship with medication, I came to understand that, at times, I was medicating my 'docile body' so I could perform patriarchal neoliberalism 'perfectly'. This served the purpose of silencing the alarm bells of impending burnout so I could push through and keep going. Conditioning women (Ahmad, 2023) into the 'good woman' who pleases all (Ehrstein, 2022; Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006) upholds the dominant narrative of women as inferior (Bartky, 1998) and creates space for the pathologization of people-pleasing (Gilligan, 1977; Ussher, 2023) and fosters burnout in women at higher rates than men. Tanya is a self-proclaimed "people-pleaser" and has found that "trying to navigate where my needs would fit in" was challenging and self-reflection and boundaries were a key part of reclaiming a sense of autonomy over her wellbeing and rest. This need to perform 'people-pleaser' is yet another way women self-discipline through self-surveillance to meet societal expectations to be everything for everyone all of the time (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Gill, 2007; Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006). Tanya named that she and her "husband come from very different backgrounds" and if you "add people pleasing, making sure that everyone's happy…I was probably…not looking after myself in ways that I should".

Sacrificing herself for other people's comfort did not have the impact Tanya thought it would; she reflected on how it left her more exhausted and disconnected from herself and those around her. Since it is beyond the scope of this research, I did not ask why it was she who felt the need to please

everyone and not her husband; why she needed to meet, care for, and fit into the needs, wants, and expectations of everyone else. However, it is important to tease this out in relation to rest because, as Tanya shared, this was “[u]sually to my own detriment and also if rest had been an option I would have chosen [rest] the majority [of the time]”. Tanya, like so many others, “was always giving, giving, giving” to everyone but herself.

As Steph reflected on being “a perfectionist and an A-type personality” and how this continues to drive her need and ability to be everything for everyone, I noticed the recurring tendency to sacrifice oneself for the benefit and ease of others. Tanya explained how she would find herself “shape-shifting into however this situation needed…which takes energy and effort”. I was reminded of Gilligan’s (1977) suggestion that women’s “moral dilemmas hold them in a mode of judgment that is insistently contextual”; situatedly, we are not necessarily a type-A personality or perfectionist until labelled that, until someone judges us to be performing those characteristics. Tanya believed performing the ‘pleaser’ would “get me what I needed, what I wanted. A happy family equals happy me”. She came to learn “[i]t doesn't. [I]f anything, it just leaves you even less energized. So if you think about rest, you're kind of giving your resources away in so many directions to kind of get through each day. Head hits the pillow, and you've ticked off all these things. I must be killing it”. After all, a ‘good woman’ takes care of everyone and everything.

Something Has to Give – And It’s (Probably) Me

There was a subtle yet persistent tension in how women spoke about themselves in relation to being productive and becoming rested. On one hand, they would say, "I don't think of myself as a very busy person" (Steph), but in the next breath they described lives filled with constant responsibilities – care work, emotional labour, professional demands, community commitments, and so much more. This flavour of narrative contradiction is not just about the details of their schedules; it points to something deeper. There is often discomfort, or even resistance, around identifying as someone who needs or wants rest, let alone someone who is overwhelmed and feeling like the only one not able to handle it.

Vanessa made an interesting point about the stigma behind mental health and the link to disengaging from rest; for so many, rest is only for when you are unwell and need to recover. If you need rest beyond that, it is because you cannot keep up with the busy modern pace of today’s world.

She observed how “[u]p until [recently], nobody ever really talked publicly about mental health”. Vanessa reflected on how people had to “be quiet about it…Have your breakdown at home”. This led her to believe everyone “seems to be surviving and coping really well. [S]o you just put that face on as well”. She shared how if someone experienced “a breakdown at work”, it was “whispered about in this really negative way when in fact…everyone was in the same boat”. Engaging in rest risks admitting to fragility, inferiority and vulnerability in a world that rewards resilience and perseverance. So instead, rest gets framed cautiously — softened, justified, and often apologized for. It shows up as both a longing and a negotiation. Steph caught her own conflict between one version of self and another:

I don't think of myself as lazy. I think of myself as resting quite a lot.

Oh, God, if you knew me better, you'd probably be going, are you sure?

Anyway…

The tension was apparent for Steph as she explored the seesawing between internal needs, wants, and desires and the external expectations of what we *should* want; “[i]t's this pressure [of] materialism and [needing] two double incomes”. She wondered, “why did life become so hard financially?” Steph observed how “everyone [is] working and for us women who…want to work, but we also want to run the household, and we want to mother our children, but…we want careers, and, you know, like…something has to give”.

The Something That Gives

Did you ever hear that analogy about the glass balls?

[Y[ou know, you're juggling so so many balls and you have to let some drop eventually.

And you just hope it's not the glass ones.

Did you ever hear that one?

Where, you know, the glass ones are like your [child]'s piano recital that [they’ve] been working towards for like two years…that's the ball that you cannot, cannot, cannot drop because if it smashes it's gone.

Whereas, like, the whole vacuuming, you know, the vacuuming is just like a shitty plastic ball. If it drops, nobody cares. So…you're juggling 50 balls, and you just have to… you are going to drop them.

So no, I don't think it's possible [to feel rested].

Vanessa

Each woman, in some unique way, explored what it means to try to navigate toward balance, toward becoming rested, while negotiating the push-pull of modern-day life and western society. Vanessa feels that the level of stress and number of things to juggle these days is "just crippling. So, I feel like something always has to give". Vanessa reflected on this balance, sharing how she connects to what is most important and letting go of the things that can be dropped. Janelle explained how the school her child is at requires you to "check the app [for] what [they] need for school the next day, and they're constantly emailing you stuff…it's [too much]". This is one of the things that had to give; her and her family cannot be constantly processing an excessive amount of information and stimulation, they have to "just focus on what you need [and] what you need to do". Each woman reflected on how, if we are going to attempt feeling rested and well, then something always has to give; the first thing that gets pushed down the list of priorities is themselves – their own happiness, needs, desires, dreams, and wellbeing.

Several women expressed that their burnout is not only due to the stress of being busy, but also due to a loss of purpose and passion – on an embodied, felt-sense level. From what I have learned and experienced throughout this project, a contributing factor to a loss of passion and purpose is the pressure to perform the 'good woman as pleaser' under the dominant patriarchal gaze (Bartky, 1998). There does not seem to be room for purpose-led initiatives under androcentric neoliberal standards. Vanessa shared that she is quitting her side hustle that she thoroughly enjoys "because I was hitting burnout…I was like, nope". She found that "once you start doing something for a job, you don't do it as a hobby so much anymore". She went on to unpack the challenging balance between doing something that rejuvenates you and something that adds pressure to achieve an outcome – this conflict between becoming rested and pursuing rest is a tension I find myself grappling with often.

Steph reflected on how the busyness of life has led to a "loss of ikigai (*Japanese concept for our reason for being, our purpose*)". She shared how the spiritual exhaustion from being disconnected

from meaningful and purposeful experiences – from putting her needs and wants to the side – contributed to her burnout, which she believes is caused "largely by the society that we live in". Even though, for Steph, "[i]t's become easier and easier to put me first", she still thinks "we should be brought up in a society where we don't have to spend [decades] to learn that lesson". Steph does not believe we should need to "seek[ ] out things to recharge us or to rest us…that whole balance…should be inherent in everything that we do in our daily life". She reminded us "[w]e shouldn't have to be carving out those…periods of time…It's still not enough to prevent fatigue, burnout, mental exhaustion".

Burnout – It's Just the Way It Is

I was not surprised by how terms like 'burnout', 'cortisol', and 'nervous system' were salient in every one of the conversations. Naomi named this right from the start, "So, my cortisol levels are just consistently high, of course," as if this is just the way it is for every woman, and high cortisol is now a given. I was under a similar impression; up until the final draft of this paper, I thought the section on burnout was going to be the biggest and most prevalent – it turned out to be one of the smallest. I have come to believe that burnout – or how we conceptualize and pathologize it today – is less a matter of someone becoming drained by their work and more a manifestation of the systemically-embedded androcentric exploitation and oppression of marginalized people, particularly women (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Came et al., 2022; Ussher, 2023).

Burnout now permeates the situated lived experience of so many women. Steph shared her experiences of "fatigue, burnout, mental exhaustion" while recounting the very moment burnout took hold. She explained how the "fatigue might have been the result of me going, thank fuck, I've just done 18 years of parenting, [and] I ended up in hospital the next day". She was not surprised to find that "nearly every woman I've said I've had some kind of burnout…They all go, 'Oh yeah, [I or someone I know has had that']". Do women *have* 'burnout', or have we been conditioned into *being* burned-out? In the next chapter, *Politics of Rest,* I continue the analysis and discussion as we collectively unpack, deconstruct, and reimagine rest on a societal level to disrupt the individualistic deficit-focused approach to capitalizing on and pathologizing women for just trying to navigate a man's world.

5 – Politics of Rest

Rest is contextual, situated, embodied and deeply politicized; we must look at becoming rested in relation to the systems and structures women navigate to better recognize the myriad obstacles rendering rest inaccessible. The euro and androcentric systems and structures women must negotiate every day – capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, misogyny, ableism, and classism, to name a few – are working well at keeping us exhausted, overwhelmed, and distracted (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Han, 2015; Hersey, 2022). Within these frameworks, rest is not simply a personal act; it is a deeply relational and profoundly political one, as it is enmeshed in gendered societal power dynamics and expectations around productivity, sacrificial selflessness, and bodily discipline (Ehrstein, 2022; Pitre et al., 2013; Riley et al., 2019). How we choose to engage with and practice meaningful, generative rest moving forward can either uphold and perpetuate the very systems that exhaust us, or it can be an act of resistance. It can be a movement toward more liberation-focused ways of relational being in an androcentric neoliberal society that is changing and accelerating faster than we are equipped to handle (Canning & Jay, 2024; Card & Hepburn, 2023), increasingly harming and subjugating women in the process (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Koziol-McLain et al., 2023).

Throughout our human history, rest has been, and continues to be, shaped by political, social and economic systems (Asp, 2015; Corbin, 2024; Scripter, 2025). As I write this, Aotearoa's current government is drastically altering equity pay regulations – a regressive policy move that further entrenches gendered economic inequality. This decision comes at a time when so many women are already unable to meet basic living costs and are experiencing profound burnout (Artz et al., 2022; Minister of Health, 2023; Ussher, 2023). Rather than addressing systemic inequities, the government appears to be emulating reactionary shifts seen in other parts of the world, dragging us backward into an era further steeped in social and economic injustice. It feels, to me, rather convenient for these social power relations that exhausted and depleted women have less capacity to meaningfully organize, resist, and trouble these systems of oppression – we are already too burned out from not being 'good enough'.

Performing Patriarchal Neoliberalism 'Good Enough'

Janelle reflected on how contemporary workplace culture and expectations exploit the dominant neoliberal narrative that "if you work hard then you're successful". She explained how it's "full on the whole time you're [at her place of work]". Staff members – predominantly women – are expected to stay engaged with clients even on their limited "active break", aligning with the dominant narrative that women are expected to self-sacrifice to care for others (Doyle et al., 2013). Her work is "always short-staffed and [staff are] expected to do more than we really should be" – supporting the dominant narrative that women must work more than men in the public domain (Artz et al., 2022; Bharj & Adams, 2023; Robnett & Vierra, 2023), as well as the second and third shifts (Krstić et al., 2025; Locke, 2023). This relentless draining of energy does not feel like success to Janelle. In the midst of economic and cost-of-living stress, many women feel like they must put up with these unrealistic and exploitive standards and expectations because they are "trying to pay bills and the mortgage…all that" (Janelle). In a society that takes so much more from women than it gives, women must constantly contemplate and negotiate their priorities within the limited time and other resources they do and do not have access to.

I found it interesting how Vanessa referred to herself as "not a particularly ambitious person" when describing her lack of desire for, what she perceives as, the things society deems crucial for success and happiness – she has no desire to "keep[ ] up with the Joneses". This perceived lack of ambition had me reflecting on the self-propelling cycle of neoliberal capitalism and how, in positioning women as inferior, the social and cultural has become internalized and transformed women's views on and perspectives of themselves (Gill, 2008). I was curious about what might convince a woman who works full-time, has a family and myriad commitments, roles, and hobbies to navigate and manage, and worked a "side-hustle" that she thoroughly enjoyed – until burnout started to emerge and she reprioritized – feeling 'not ambitious enough'. To me, this does not seem like an unambitious woman; it seems like a woman who does not fit the neoliberal, late capitalist, individualistic societal 'perfectibility of man' because, apparently, she is not performing 'progressive' woman (Artz et al., 2022) 'good enough' (Lafrance & Stoppard, 2006).

Vanessa's interpretation of her character points to how pervasive internalized neoliberal norms, expectations, and dominant narratives have become (Card & Hepburn, 2023; van Bremen &

Natrajan-Tyagi, 2025). If women cannot attain the 'lifestyle' the neoliberal dream has sold us, we are positioned as inferior (Bartky, 1998; Gill, 2007); if women become burned out trying to achieve this dream, we are pathologized by deficit-focused medical models (Ussher, 2023) and capitalized on by the gendered self-care industry (Riley et al., 2019; Ussher, 2023). Women are expected to fit all societal, social, familial, and personal demands and expectations into their increasingly limited time. To disentangle from burnout-inducing systems, structures, power dynamics, and gendered societal norms and expectations, we must acknowledge and understand the social power relations that perpetuate them and the impact they have on women's access to time and becoming rested.

No Time to Rest…We're Accelerating

Women's access to time and rest is made almost impossible due to the situated impact of social acceleration (Canning & Jay, 2024; Rosa, 2003) and working the second and third shift (Krstić et al., 2025; Locke, 2023). Vanessa reflected on rest being important to prioritize and engage in, even if "it's not often a long period of time that I would ever feel at rest. For me, rest is…purely…one day", pointing to how limited access to time and rest is in the context of contemporary neoliberal society; women must, as Janelle pointed out, '*take time*' wherever and however she can get it. Vanessa referred to this as "the little secret rest breaks that [are] snatched here and there". It is important to unpack the paradoxical impacts of social acceleration and the impact this is having on women's ability to rest.

Naomi shared the "constant drive…Not only daily but hourly…there's no other option". Even through experiencing debilitating panic attacks, missing important quality time with her family, and moments of "What the fuck am I doing all this for?", Naomi also does not know "what else [she] would do". She "definitely feel[s] pressure [at work]. I couldn't tell you the next day I've got a lunch break. It's not happening. I always feel [the] pressure of hustle and busy culture". The pace of Naomi's life, along with meeting all that is asked of women, reiterated how important it is to trouble and resist the narratives of neoliberal success and reimagine what it means to be time- and rest-rich – allowing us to "spend as much time as I can with my [loved ones]" (Naomi).

The dominant narrative is that 'progress' is 'saving time', making it more abundant, because of technological and social advancements (Rosa, 2003), yet, as shared by each woman, we still must actively 'take time' to pause or slow down because we are expected to be always 'on' and of service

to others. Vanessa shared how her pockets of time are “when I'm driving home [alone]…I feel...very calm...And then I walk in the door, and it's all disappeared. But…those [few] minutes to a few hours of peace is what I would consider rest”. As she has gotten older, Vanessa has “kind of fought for my rest…I’m really lucky my husband is amazing”. I found it interesting that ‘fighting’ for one’s rest and being supported by one’s partner to feel rested is considered ‘lucky’ – and she is absolutely not alone in this feeling. Carla also shared feeling “very blessed and fortunate [to have a supportive partner] but at the same time with the…kids and everything else [it is hard to feel rested]”.

Multiple women spoke about their partner’s role in both supporting and hindering their ability to rest; the shared emerging understanding from these sense-makings was that, for women to feel rested, there needs to be a balancing out of labour, responsibilities, demands, and expectations – it cannot continue to “fall on the woman’s shoulders” (Janelle). As Steph pointed out (see *Something Has to Give – And It’s (Probably) Me*), it is not that women do not want to contribute, engage, and work, they just do not want to also do everything for everyone else as well. Women continuously being conditioned into (Robnett & Vierra, 2023) and positioned as the one to do and hold everything (Locke, 2023) is so systemically embedded to the point where many women feel it is just “how life has worked out” (Janelle).

Holding one’s need for rest and rejuvenation alongside the feeling of needing to be “go, go, go all the time, always on” is challenging for Janelle; she finds herself feeling like “I really shouldn’t be resting…I should be…getting stuff done”. Even in moments of “little secret rest breaks”, Vanessa reflected on how “it's kind of not my own time…It's time that I should be vacuuming [or] grocery shopping”. The pressure of imposed ‘shoulds’ – like being constantly on, available, and at everyone’s service – is extremely challenging to turn off because we have long been conditioned to perform ‘good woman’ in this way.

Steph observed something similar; she shared how she will “finish a task, and…immediately look around...what do I need to do next?” Her “partner will walk in from work and [instantly] start…helping me with dinner…we just don't stop”. The imposed expectation that every moment must be filled with effort and output gives way to the narrative that rest must mean we are lazy or not contributing anything – conveniently depleting women while turning the neoliberal hamster wheel at an incessant rate (Barnett & Bagshaw, 2020; Gill, 2008). While social acceleration has been packaged

as progress, apparently making leisure time more abundant, we are increasingly time-poor (Rosa, 2003). Carla reflected on this as a "mindset of, I've got all this free time…and I need to get stuff done". I wonder how access to rest as an embodied experience might open up if patriarchal neoliberal systems and structures were broadly resisted and reimagined to centre feeling rested within the foundational human right to be well (Te Kāhui Tika Tangata Human Rights Commission, 2025).

Steph reflected on how "we're so [exhausted]…spiritually, mentally, emotionally, physically…but we have to carve out…time". Again, women must '*take time'* if they want to simply *feel* rested; this does not offer much hope for women becoming rested while traversing contemporary society. Carla shared that she now focuses on "simplification" and asking honest questions of herself and her loved ones; "do we actually need to do that that way? Do we need to consume all of that? No". Carla reflected on how "put[ting] a limit on my phone" is an import boundary she learned through feeling like she needed to regain a sense of control and navigate her time in a way that is best for her and her family. Throughout each conversation, reclaiming *time* was one of the most salient desires; to me, this suggests that it is not about women pursuing rest, it is about troubling the social power relations and norms and expectations that are constraining and subjugating women by keeping them time-poor.

Carla shared how she will "be lying on the couch watching TV, but [have] the phone there…I'm trying to get stuff done while I'm doing that. I wouldn't consider it true rest". She noted that even if it is doing something useful, like "ordering the groceries online or…getting something out of the way", it is still not restful because it is active and expending energy – it is still mental labour. This attempt to rest is thwarted by our internalized neoliberal drive to constantly achieve and produce, multitasking – or compressing activities and experiences (Rosa, 2003) – because either we cannot 'switch off' or because we are time- and resource-poor (Fiorini, 2024; Riley et al., 2019). This imposed need to do multiple things within the same limited timeframe means many women must stack chores and activities like Jenga blocks to see how many we can get done without the tower – of self and other – toppling.

Something Still Has to Give: Burnout

Naomi expressed that finding this balance is "not a juggle per se because I love what I do. And I love my family, and I really love my lifestyle that I have, and I love my life. And none of it is by any

means a compromise for me". Later in our conversation, Naomi shared, "I get run down…unable to move, unable to talk, panic attack[s and] anxiety" and yet she has "never had a sick day". This normalizing of performing patriarchal neoliberalism at the cost of oneself reminded me of Janelle's reflection; people are "looked down on if you complain or say that this actually isn't okay", leading so many women to push through to the point of burnout. If the tone of some workplaces is "don't complain and do your job", Janelle understands why "so many female colleagues and friends…have chronic fatigue…They call it chronic fatigue but it's…basically high stress". The insights that emerged from navigating and trying to make sense of these societal expectations was a fascinating one to explore. As we pulled on this thread, Naomi drew on conflicting societal narratives between rest and unrest, rigid and compromise; "I can't create the lifestyle that we have without compromise. And then is that compromise my anxiety? Potentially, yeah. I've never thought about that".

Janelle reflected on how the internalized compulsion to never stop is what is making us sick and burned out and our western medical model is not equipped to handle it with care. Steph agreed and reflected on something similar, "the fact that doctors don't even know what adrenal fatigue is, is because it's new…it didn't exist 100 years ago because people…weren't burning out". Janelle shared how she has "been in burnout for the last 13 years. My [child is] 13. I'm in it". She has "been...a single mum [at one point]…and once [they] went to school, I started working full time again". The economic and political pressure on women to return to work the second they are 'able' alongside the "societal idea that a woman often cannot contend with the expectations imposed on her as a mother; whatever she does is perceived as insufficient or is criticised by society" (Berger et al., 2022, p. 15) is enough to burn any woman out.

As Naomi unpacked what it is like to run a successful business, while holding the role and responsibilities of mother, wife, and actively engaged community member, she explained how important it is to her to spend time with her family – this is a top priority and taking vacations together is one way they spend quality time together. Vacations are important because they are dedicated time that she and her "workaholic" husband take time off work and external demands. However, she expressed, "we can't do those things unless I work as hard as I work…because I have to pay for it". This paradox demonstrates the lose-lose situation many women have been positioned into; to have it all, you must work harder, longer, and more efficient than men (Artz et al., 2022; Bharj & Adams, 2023), while simultaneously running the household, your life, and the lives of those around you

flawlessly (Ehrstein, 2022; Krstić et al., 2025) – then maybe you can take a vacation with your loved ones – but you will probably spend the whole time feeling like you have "just been through a wildfire" (Naomi) because you are burned out from life (Pelly et al., 2022; Ussher, 2023).

Vanessa reflected on how her "little side hustle" was the something that had to give, regardless of how passionate she was about it; "as much as I love it…I wasn't getting enough rest". This side hustle, which sounded to me like anything but 'little', stemmed from a meaningful hobby but the pressure of her second and third shifts, and everything that is "on the calendar", is "why I've given up my hobby…But that's okay". This reminded me of Steph's exploration into her loss of ikigai because she does not feel like she is "living [her] life's purpose" and feels the "burnout [and] mental exhaustion" from that. From this experience, Steph learned that she "want[s] to do less" but struggles to disentangle from the androcentric neoliberal demands and expectations to do more.

When it comes to resisting burnout, Carla shared how she learned from others' lived experience, "I've had two managers…one burned out completely and one who's close. And I'm like, there's no way...we have got to learn from that example". As someone who works from home, Carla had to learn to set and hold boundaries as the space between office and home continues to dissolve in the wake of COVID. While Carla has not "got to burnout" she has experienced "periods in my life where I've given too much and…there's not been a good balance". She shared how vital "boundaries at work" have been for her to move toward what she considers balance. Having to set and hold boundaries to help mitigate burnout is another example, to me, of women being expected to manage and support self and other because of the relentless pressure of harmful androcentric, public domain expectations (Bharj & Adams, 2023; Gilligan, 1977).

Carla shared how she tries to remind her team at work that "we're not put on this earth to work…all the time" and "our lives and us as people are most important". Carla wants her colleagues "to put boundaries in, and I want to do that myself". As Scripter (2025) notes, the ever-blurring lines between work and time off are a key contributing factor to 'overload' and overwhelm. These blurred lines are very apparent for Carla; working from home has shown her how one "could easily just get totally wrapped up and consumed with work because it's right there…there's no disconnect between you [and work]". The level to which women are expected to be actively 'on', available, and ready to

please greatly contributes to our need to stack tasks so we can 'achieve' everything on our never-ending to-do list.

Steph shared how she often feels "this pressure…I wake up in the middle of the night, and I go, What am I doing?" When Steph followed up by saying she is "on the brink of buying a new business because I need something to do", I considered how the societal pressure to constantly produce and be busy emerges in so many different, situated ways. Even when space is created to become rested – Steph is currently on sabbatical due to burnout – social power relations, demands, and expectations are so deeply ingrained that being busy is all we know, keeping us confined within these dominant narratives.

Resisting Dominant Narratives of the 'Good Woman'

Perpetuating the adage that we cannot pour from an empty cup, each woman spoke to the necessity of 'pouring' into themselves to more powerfully show up within their family, friendships, work, and life overall. This exploration often started with an unpacking of what rest offers them, how it makes them feel, and then moved toward how rest capacitates them to more intentionally and powerfully move through their life and handle the challenges that come their way. For Tanya, rest is something that helps her "recharge or resource or refill" by "doing what I need to…top up". Carla shared her need to "actually prioritiz[e] having a rest [so I'm] able to be a better…person, mum, partner, wife, family member". For her, rest is about rejuvenating so she can "keep going. Get stuff done [and] enjoy life more". The tension between performing 'good woman/mother' and "enjoying your own life more" (Vanessa) underscores the conflicting narratives women must constantly navigate and negotiate.

One way Vanessa navigates this tension and resists the 'good mother' is by cultivating a reciprocal partnership with her husband. Having a mutually supportive relationship with her partner is extremely important to her when it comes to feeling rested and well. Vanessa has learned, throughout their relational process of being married and parents, that she "can say to him, 'Hey, I'm not feeling great. I just need to go lie down for a few hours'. He'll be like, 'yeah, fine. I've got the kids. Go for it'. They worked to find a balance where "when one of us was overwhelmed it was just like, 'tag you're it. I need to go'. No questions asked". This reciprocal relationship within their private domain troubles and challenges the dominant narrative of 'good woman' as 'good wife', disentangling

from the expectation that the woman solely is responsible for all three shifts – moving to recentre becoming and feeling rested. And still, according to Vanessa, “you can be married to the best guy in the world, the most helpful guy, but it's still not doable [for women to feel rested in today’s world]”.

Each woman shared how hard it is to take time for themselves, time where there is no pressure to accomplish anything or support anyone else. This tension between resting for the sake of feeling rested and pursuing rest to better serve others is a complex one to tease apart. This dominant individualistic and self-sacrificing narrative is multi-layered and complex; it implies women must take care of themselves solely to ‘be the best version’ of themselves and ‘show up more powerfully’ for other people, perpetuating women as subservient. Yet, through reviewing the literature (Asp, 2015; Jordan, 2023; Lax et al., 2023; Scripter, 2025), speaking with each woman and reflexively exploring my own experiences, I have come to learn that embodying a healthy, reciprocal relationship with self and others is a key element of becoming rested and well. I wonder if, by society prioritizing becoming rested and well, we could move from the ‘either-or’ narrative of productivity and rest toward a ‘both-and’ – where women can do and have what they want and need within their situated context without sacrificing themselves and what is important to them.

Disentangling From Social and Cultural Power Relations

Carla reflected on how she has “had to work hard” to achieve a state where she “could block out some time in my diary without any guilt and take a rest”; “it takes work” to disentangle from the expectations and impacts of neoliberalism that is progressively corroding our wellbeing (van Bremen & Natrajan-Tyagi, 2025; Vollebregt et al., 2024). Carla offered that our “culture in general [and] the amount of stuff and online influence” is also culpable for our disconnect from rest. To counter this rupture, she believes we must “figure[e] out what's important to you and what you want to focus on and what success looks like for you”.

Naomi reflected on how she does not “believe in work-life balance…For me…it's not a thing. I have a business; I have a husband; I have children; and I have friends. And every now and then, out of that, something needs a little bit more so [I reprioritize]”. To me, this sounds very much like the process of balance – maybe just not what the neo-self-care industry and female entrepreneur complex has convinced us it should be. Naomi explored how she has worked hard to know what does and does not work for her; the pressure of the dominant narratives and imposed expectations appear

to be more stressful than if she were encouraged and supported to live life on her terms, honouring her own situated context.

It was interesting to hear Steph navigate the conflict between “financially, I can totally afford not to work for the rest of the year…there's this guilt about not working and allowing myself to be living here in paradise”. Steph believes that she has all her needs met and still wonders, “why is it that I still want to keep pushing, pushing, pushing to earn more money and to fill my day with work, work, work?” This made me reflect on how intellectually knowing something does not translate into a felt, embodied knowing; it does not mean it is easy to disentangle from how the social and cultural have gotten inside (Gill, 2008). Steph wondered, “Why can't I just allow myself to enjoy it?” Even though Steph shared she is essentially living the proverbial neoliberal dream, the guilt associated with slowing down and enjoying the fruits of her labour leaves a bitter taste, rendering moments of could-be rest constrained under and by the dominant patriarchal gaze.

Tanya reflected on the power imbalance with gender roles, stereotypes, and societal expectations (Cole, 2023); “you need to be able to almost justify…how important you are. I don't think I've ever met a man that has had to justify his wants and needs. [T]hat might be just around me, but certainly no men in my life have ever had to justify any need or want”. Vanessa shared having to “really ask for what you want” when it comes to rest. Carla shared how her “husband is a rester…he needs complete do-nothing time. And I [used to say] ‘no, we’ve got to get all of this stuff done’”. Through these sense makings, I found myself wondering, again, about who has access to time and rest, who does not, and *why*. As noted by Corbin (2024), rest is still very much the domain of men; because men traditionally occupy the public domain, they have more access to rest and restful activities without having to ‘take time’ – they innately deserve it. The inherent, internalized gender roles and societal expectations imposed on women are keeping them busy and exhausted because of the continued devaluation of private domain roles and responsibilities (Ehrstein, 2022; Riley et al., 2019).

When asked if it is possible to be rested and well in today’s society, Tanya shared, “it would be pretty hard…Unless the generations are changing”. Vanessa shared that, because there are “so many things” women have to manage, navigate, and negotiate, it is “not really” possible to be rested as a woman. The first dominant narrative she named is one steeped in institutional misogyny and sexism (Drakett, 2023; Torres et al., 2024); “if you're focusing on job and family…women are always

going to be at a disadvantage taking maternity leave". She recalled how someone she knows, "who worked [at a business] for years and years…was just passed over and passed over because…she was having kids and…It's all that bullshit". This 'motherhood penalty' (Torres et al., 2024) and inability to perform the 'good woman', the 'good mother', and now, the 'good 'progressive' woman' to the standard of contemporary society is surveilled and disciplined under the dominant patriarchal gaze that keeps women striving toward androcentric 'perfection'.

When pondering what potential outcomes we might see if, as a collective, we centred rest and wellbeing, Steph shared, "so much better work. I mean, the first thing I said is better work productivity, but why is that important? But yeah, better work productivity. Better mental health[,] better, stronger communities because people are happier and healthier". While it may not be surprising that productivity was the first thing named, it is telling to witness Steph catch herself and question where that value comes from – and whether it still holds meaning for her. Her reflection revealed just how deeply ingrained our attachment to productivity is, even in conversations about rest. Steph is hopeful that the deconditioning from patriarchal neoliberal ways of doing business can happen and that the "newer generation…might rewrite our working week" and "help build and create a work-life balance".

Carla reflected on her "own internal…demands on myself to be productive" and how she had to learn how to untangle from these; she "either…[had to] build rest in as a priority or you just keep going and…get to burnout". Naomi expressed how important it has been for her to critically look at and resist the narratives of rest and self-care that social media and society have created and continue to perpetuate. It is not as simple as women solely reclaiming time; there needs to be an active disentanglement from the imposed narratives and power relations women have inherited. Naomi reflected on "looking very deep within myself…to know that [tasks] can be done without me". This consideration of it not all having to 'fall on the woman's shoulders' had me curious about the continuous, emerging process of becoming rested; there is still, for women, the effort of redefining through meaning-making and (re)relating with self, other, and society to reclaim time for self to become disentangled and, subsequently (hopefully), rested.

(Re)Discovering Rest as an Embodied Experience

Each woman explored, reflected on, and shared how they have, over time and through the relational process of becoming, re-evaluated and re-defined rest from the inside out in the context of their own situated experiences. The influence of others and self-disciplining under the dominant patriarchal gaze was an ever-present tension that each woman grappled with. Lee et al. (2024) and Ekinci et al. (2025) showed how 'influencers', predominantly using social media to spread their narrative and ideals, have a greater impact than most, if not all, other forms of marketing. They have the coercive power to 'influence' – or more aptly, gaslight – their followers into buying whatever narrative they are selling. Naomi shared how she has been questioning and troubling this influence, expressing how she "get[s] torn on what I'm meant to be doing [as rest]". She has come to "think my perception of rest is maybe different to what society's is", highlighting the importance of teasing out what is genuinely meaningful rest from what is being packaged as rest or self-care, helping us make better, more informed choices on how and where we spend our time, money, and energy.

In this '#hustle era' of the so-called 'progressive' woman (Artz et al., 2022), it is important to take a moment to get reacquainted with our own needs and desires and what practices or experiences are realistic and useful within our situated context. If anyone knows the importance of rejuvenating rest needing to be seamlessly woven into the context of daily life as an embodied experience, it is Janelle. Among many other things, Janelle is mother to a child who is "pretty full on" and the full-time manager of a team in a high-stress work environment, who also lives with complex and chronic health conditions; she does not "have a lot of spare time" yet must feel her best so she can move through her life well. She knows how crucial "just five minutes" is to her "overall wellbeing". This means her "10-minute break" consists of "five minutes of mindfulness, and that is the one thing that is a really good…instant reset for me". For Janelle, "just sitting quietly with my eyes closed [and] blocking everything else out [is] literally the only thing that will rejuvenate me".

This struggle to become rested as time-poor and societally constrained women is intricately linked with the struggle to be recognized, validated, and accepted as inherently whole, autonomous women – whose value is not tied to her level of output under the dominant patriarchal gaze. In this way, androcentric neoliberal dominant narratives continue to uphold the portrayal of women as problem and reproduce gendered forms of erasure and control, constraining how rest is understood

and experienced as a woman. The examples of rest shared by Janelle cost no money, do not require an external product, service, or person to make them possible, and can be engaged with at any time. In the process of becoming rested, the problematic gendered self-care industry and its dominant narratives are inherently troubled, disrupted, and resisted as becoming 'self-cared for' evolves into *feeling rested* – no longer relying on exploitative and oppressive systems.

De-Pathologizing Self-Care

The need to rest, recover, and restore is fundamental to our wellbeing (Torres-Soto et al., 2022), yet it is societally framed as a reward rather than a right, particularly for those whose identities fall outside dominant norms (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Came et al., 2022). These messages are not neutral; they are inscribed within social hierarchies and expectations that shape how rest is internalized and enacted throughout life. Each women shared stories of debilitating exhaustion, overwhelm, and depletion of self for the benefit of others – and yet caring for themselves was spoken of not as a foundational element of health and longevity but as something indulgent, luxurious, and only to be engaged in out of desperation – and if they could manage to 'take time' for it. That said, each woman also shared their emerging, evolving process of becoming rested through unlearning and reimagining genuine 'self-care' from their situated experiences.

We learn these unspoken rules from our carers and those whose sphere of influence and situated contexts we move within from the very beginning and throughout our life (Ahmad, 2023; Robnett & Vierra, 2023). The tension many women brought forward when unpacking their evolving understanding of rest supported this; they all shared an unlearning of inherited and societally programmed narratives and behaviours so they could move toward a personally and contextually meaningful definition and experience of feeling rested and well. When Naomi reflecting on her panic attacks, Naomi shared that "it's taken a long time for me to allow myself that privilege of having the time to…go, 'we've just been through a wildfire. We need a moment'", I was struck again by how elusive – through social and gendered power relations – genuine care for self has become for women.

Carla expressed how "privileged" she feels to "have so much more time to spend on the important things". She shared how grateful she is to be able to centre wellbeing and health for her and her family by moving to a smaller town and changing how she works. From a critical feminist lens grounded in intersectionality, this access to 'privilege' must be understood within the intersections of

gender, race, class, and culture that influence on and govern women's (in)accessibility to rest (Crenshaw, 1991; Pino Gavidia & Adu, 2022). From here, we can trouble why feeling rested and well is considered a privilege and question whose rest is supported and whose is not, who can engage in meaningful rest and who is denied the 'privilege'.

As I listened to each woman share her experiences of becoming rested, I reflected on the enduring tension: while these moments appeared deeply nourishing precisely because of their simplicity, they also underscored the paradox that rest is not presently immanent but instead requires the intentional act of 'taking time' to be experienced and felt. The inability to be rested and well in everyday life is frequently framed as a personal failing (Fullagar & O'Brien, 2014), a 'deficit' often pathologized or capitalized on by the gendered self-care (Adkins-Jackson et al., 2023; Riley et al., 2019). Within an exploitatively commoditized world, it is vital to identify tools and practices that are free, readily available, accessible, and brief enough to integrate into daily life. We cannot reasonably – or respectfully – ask rest-poor, time-poor, and resource-poor women to invest money and time in practices of rest when the very notion of spending those finite resources – if they have them – can increase stress levels when there is already "no time" (Janelle).

When I shared what I call my pockets of pause – 10-60 second practices – with Steph, we discussed how unheard of this type of approach is for so many. She exclaimed, "I could potentially find 30-second fixes throughout the day? That's a game changer". Janelle agreed, caring for ourselves has to be woven into the fabric of our day because "there is no time". These surprisingly simple practices have drastically changed my life – from noticeably decreased anxiety and better sleep to healthier emotional regulation and reverence for life again – I am a completely different person. At first, Vanessa thought "bullshit", there was no way these practices could work but after experiencing their effects, she has found them to be "magical" ways of "centring when I was really stressed". I have received similar feedback from people I work and train with; there is a potency to approaching rest gently – less is more, slow is fast.

These resistances to dominant narratives – convincing us to seek and consume commoditized versions of rest – reminded me, more than anything, that moving through these urgent, volatile times also requires a balance of slow, deep, relationally centred rest – capacitating us to stay informed and reimagine ways forward that centre liberation for all. Rest is often considered a solo task or activity;

however, this narrative perpetuates the western individualistic ideology that is part of the problem. The resistance to individualism is relationality, collectivism. Lilla Watson (1985) reminds me that because my rest is inherently tied to your rest, my wellbeing is intricately tied to your wellbeing, my liberation from oppressive systems and dominant narratives is unquestionably tied to your liberation, a rest-rich and well future must be relationally centred.

Reclaiming, Becoming, and Feeling Rest

Across each woman's individual story, rest emerged not as a fixed state to be universally achieved, but as a deeply contextual, relational and evolving process – one that is shaped by each woman's embodied, situated experience. Naomi noted, "I hear people saying that they read books and nope, that's not me," illustrating how comparison can help clarify, not just confuse, our internal compass. For these women, rest was not simply about achieving a static sense of peace but engaging in an ongoing, intuitive exploration of what brings ease, nourishment, and internal alignment. Is it possible to be in and of this current iteration of society *and* feel rested? I asked some form of this question to each woman as our conversations naturally started to close. It was a resounding no.

Janelle thinks becoming and feeling rested in the context of today's world is "a big ask". Knowing others are juggling as much and more than she is, she does not see how rest can be centred or even moderately achieved. Tanya thinks it would be "really tough" to be rested and well in today's world, it would take "confidence and [being] connected with self". For her, "it would need…a woman really tuned into her own wants and needs". Carla shared that in learning what is best for her, she now knows "we have to demonstrate it. We have to do it. We have to rest. We have to take a break". These reflections reiterate, for me, there would need to be a drastic shift in how society operates, what we place value on, and how we relate to care for self and others (Eisler, 1991, 2014). Vanessa reminded us, "you have to really ask for [what you need]". As such, the question may not be *how do I rest*, but *what kind of rest allows me to feel most like myself?*

This pursuit is intimate and fluid, and must be personally significant to be genuinely restorative (Asp, 2015; Scripter, 2025). While rest may mean different things to different people, what unites these accounts is the understanding that rest involves a meaningful connection to something that evokes a sense of ease, clarity, and inner peace – even if only momentarily. Finding what is restful and rejuvenating for you starts with "asking questions around where [you] are happiest" (Steph). Tanya

reflected on how she “get[s] so much peace and…enjoyment out of spending time by myself, however that looks”. For her, it is no longer about what others deem to be restful; it must make her feel a certain way. Whether it is “reading”, “writing”, “sitting in the sun”, or “going for a walk”, it must be something meaningful that “tops [her] up”. The process of figuring out what might be most beneficial requires “time to check in” and ask, “What would make me really happy? What would make me feel really contented and really fulfilled in that moment?” She shared, “that's my rest now”.

I Matter

Each woman, if her own words and way, shared their experiences of revelation that their needs, their wellbeing, their rest matter, that *they* matter. Often, this realization came from either becoming ill, a big life change, or experiencing burnout – or coming too close for comfort. Tanya reflected on this evolution and how there has been “a real shift in knowing that what I need is far more important”. This led to the unpacking of what role each person in her family plays; “it was about other people's needs and other people's emotions and I'm like, ‘What? You mean I'm not responsible for everyone in my family’?” This unravelling moved Tanya from “needing external validation” and “people pleasing” toward “[p]ersonal growth and that realization that for whatever reason, the way that I saw the world was from, I guess a survival…I had to do what I had to do”.

Tanya shared her journey toward realizing, “I'm the most important thing and…if I'm well and if I'm resourced and if I'm doing what I need to do and what I want to do, then it makes for a healthier relationship. A healthier mother, a healthier friend”. She observed that “I can be there for me first and foremost, and then I can be there for others. And rest, however that looks...is a huge part of that”. Within her current situatedness, Tanya understands rest as a crucial component for being and moving through the world well. With the incessant demands of everyday life, work, family, and everything in between, rest is something that makes “navigat[ing] the world [easier] when things come your way. [When] something’s stressful but you’re…rested so I can do this’” (Tanya). The notion that women must rest just to get through and survive the systems we navigate feels defeating and like our ‘docile bodies’ are on a factory setting – wake up, do everything for everyone and look good doing it, rest under the disciplinary gaze of self and everyone else, sleep (if you can), repeat. Steph reflected on how, in the face of everything women must hold, navigate and negotiate, it is important to remember “you are worthy. [Y]ou deserve to be the best you can be, the best version of you that you can be” – “and…it’s one I need to hear myself”.

A Rested Woman is a Wise (and Potentially Dangerous) Woman

Throughout every conversation, women reflected on how they have “never thought about that” (Naomi) in response to some of the questions about rest and their relationship to and engagement with it. Speaking to and truly hearing women in their storytelling and truths is a powerful catalyst for individual liberation and collective change, “not only do our stories help us make sense of what has happened and who and where we are; they also help us see or plan what could happen and who or what we could become” (Woodiwiss et al., 2017, p. 21). Hersey (2022) suggests that space for introspection and contemplating life, as well as pursuing what is interesting and important to us, are key elements of rest; having these conversations can help us think about and feel more deeply into how a rested self – and potential shift in cultural perspective – might feel.

Reflections and advice on how things could be different infused each conversation, almost like a daydream of how this could be possible. From how we might reclaim time and become rested to what it would take to centre it in today’s world; each woman had her own way of moving with this. Tanya noticed how “[t]here's a wisdom now that I didn't have before” and, while she’s “still conscious of others’ needs and others’ expectations”, if she “want[s] to say yes…[it’ll be] to something that I feel that I can enjoy fully, not just doing it for someone else”. Carla also shared that recentring rest and wellbeing “comes with…time and perspective and…looking back and being like, ‘oh…actually, I don't have to do what that person's doing, I need to do what's right for me and my needs, desires, wants”.

As Vanessa reflected on how during school holidays “the house is normally…a bomb site”, it was interesting to hear what came from her resistance to performing ‘good woman/mother’; “This year…I just didn't. Didn't vacuum, the washing [was left]...And it's actually been the most restful school holiday break we've ever, ever had”. This experience led Vanessa to realize, “because I'm not stressing about it…everyone else is not so stressed. And the house didn't fall down because it wasn't vacuumed”. As I listened, I sat with the felt-sense of the ‘the house not falling down’ and everyone being rested and well when the imposed stress, pressure and expectations are resisted and released – if even for a moment.

For us to move toward becoming and feeling more rested and well within ourselves, Tanya reflected on the importance of living by example, “as women watch and observe, they can think, I want that. And then it goes down the line, and…a woman can say, what do I really want? What do I

really need?" Carla added the importance of boundaries and "prioritizing the right stuff for you…and being okay with just saying, no". This capacity to say no makes me wonder if a rested and self-aware woman is less likely to buy into what an andro and eurocentric society is selling us. For Carla, the way forward is "simplification…don't buy as much, don't consume as much...what do you actually need in life? What's fulfilling and do more of that…have more of that and less…stuff". A society that treats everything like a commodity is going to soon realize all resources are finite, including women's time and health (Vollebregt et al., 2024).

Steph has noticed that her connection to ikigai is a central tenet of feeling rested and well; "Ikigai is your sense of purpose. So…you wake up in the morning and…you know what you're doing, you know what your job is, what your life is, what your day is going to look like, and it gives you satisfaction". Her loss of ikigai when life circumstances changed meant a re-evaluation of what is important and what she wants to centre in her life. Purpose and meaning are key elements of being healthy and well; it is a driving force behind the decisions we make and actions we take (Asp, 2015). I wonder how much more connected to our purpose we would be if we were rested and rejuvenated – and how much more rested and well we would be if our basic needs were supported and space was created to enjoy this gift of the human experience.

There was a shared questioning of performing society's patriarchal neoliberal norms and expectations. For Janelle, centring rest and wellbeing would mean "buy[ing] a little bit of land with a tiny home for starters, because then there's going to be less mortgage, less insurance, all the costs are going to be less". This, alongside "minimal technology", would allow her to "keep…life as simple as you can". Steph added to this from the 'wisdom she has gained over her life', "Do it now. Live in paradise now". For Steph, it is about "living for now, not being afraid of the future or what other people think. Just doing what you want to do now" – for women to do that, Steph believes we have to move toward "worthiness [and believing we deserve to enjoy life]". It is one thing to have these insights and intellectually know life is for more than working for the system under the dominant patriarchal gaze, it is another thing entirely to let that wisdom seep into the marrow of your bones and live life in ways that inspire and replenish you. Janelle is "trying to figure out how to get off that hamster wheel but not quite knowing how". I wonder if it is possible to get off when western society as a whole is the hamster wheel.

Disentangling from this cortisol-fuelled, fast-paced, and extractive world involves collective recognition of these oppressive forces and the impact they continue to have on women's overall safety and wellbeing. As each woman shared their experience of becoming rested through knowing and feeling unrest, they all reflected on their current resistances to societal norms and expectations and social power relations. From these stories, I wonder if, in becoming rested, women will inherently begin to question, trouble, and resist these systems and narratives *without* sacrificing themselves. If yes, is it possible that, by women becoming rested, their subsequent resistance to oppressive systems and narratives is what eventually dismantles and reimagines androcentric neoliberal society and its systems of oppression and exploitation?

Feeling Rested: Infusing Our Situatedness With Rest

History has shown us how many societies once revered rest as a gateway to creativity, spiritual depth, and communal strength (Corbin, 2024; Scripter, 2025) – after speaking with each woman and traveling with this project, I believe we can reimagine how we individually and collectively move toward becoming rested and well in the context of our situated experiences. And, if we cannot yet do it for ourselves, perhaps we can do it for the "younger and younger people struggling with anxiety" because they "think [they have] to save the planet" (Steph). She spoke of her own child and their peers – already experiencing "burnout" from the "mental stress of trying to [change and save the world]". In advocacy and mental health spaces, I have seen this too: people trying to meet crisis with urgency, trying to fight patriarchal neoliberal systems of oppression with relentless effort as they try to 'smash the patriarchy' (Came et al., 2022), all while running on empty. This approach mirrors the very intensity and dynamic of the problems they seek to solve.

If exhaustion and overwhelm contribute to women being positioned and portrayed as 'docile bodies' (Bartky, 1998), rest could be what cultivates our connection to self, other, and life, while reconnecting us with our greater purpose, or what Steph refers to as our ikigai, that has been stifled by burnout. Throughout these conversations, I have come to understand how a rested woman questions, challenges, and resists the force of disciplinary gazes while troubling dominant narratives. These cultural neoliberal, capitalist ideals and narratives promote burnout as a badge of honour and frame rest as laziness, indulgence, or failure. Janelle explained how her partner will "just get on with it" even if he is unwell or exhausted. This made her question, "why? Who said...whose rule is that?

Because I disagree and let's rewrite the rule book". Maybe a rested woman has the capacity to not only question the rule book, but to also rewrite and (restfully) self-publish it.

Days or weeks later, each woman, in their own way, reached out to share how meaningful and potent the conversation was for them. Many shared that the conversation felt therapeutic and inspiring. Through reflecting on and sharing their own experiences, insights, and wisdom, they felt empowered to acknowledge and act on what they truly needed for their own wellbeing. Each woman reminded me that, to embody rest, we must redefine what *becoming rested* means and feel into that, rather than replicating the dynamics of constant pursuing, resisting the 'slippery slope' of neoliberal capitalism (Rosa, 2003). When Vanessa said, "I can do exactly what I want", I felt a sense of reclaiming autonomy from the clutches of society and choosing how we spend our time and energy while still traversing the confines of this current world; I felt a sense of saying *no* to capitalism and consumerism and *yes* to getting reacquainted with our genuine wants and needs, however possible that is in today's world.

While Carla is happy to see a shift and navigation toward becoming rested and well, she, like Steph, is already thinking about "the next phase"; she knows we must start "protecting the kids from…all [of the] influence and smoke and mirrors and demands on them". Carla's focus now is figuring out, "how do I protect [my kids] from that for as long as possible?" This question is crucial as we reimagine a rest-rich, liberated, and well society for generations to come – we must re-evaluate what is most important to us individually and collectively so we have a central axis to organize around and travel back to when we inevitably fall off course (Eisler, 1991, 2014). My hope is that the welfare of all living beings becomes this central axis, surrounded by and nestled on a bed of rest as we move toward slowing and calming our situated and, potentially, collective waters. In the next chapter, *Conclusion: A Rest-Rich Revolution*, I offer a collection of insights gathered through this project and ways women might – individually and collectively – move toward becoming rested.

6 – Conclusion: A Rest-Rich Revolution

I began this project with a deep interest in women's everyday experiences of rest as a woman trying to navigate contemporary society. I wanted to know how women understand and engage in meaningful rest in today's world, and what barriers they face when becoming and feeling rested while navigating their situated lived experience and their myriad roles, responsibilities, and imposed demands and expectations. Each woman shared an evolving, emergent understanding of rest and how important it has been to (re)define what rest means to them at this stage and phase of their life. The stories shared by each woman, woven into the tapestry of the group's collective offering, illustrate how the experience of rest is so much more than an individual affair; it is deeply relational and entangled, and it must be explored on a micro, proximal level as well as a macro, societal level.

Returning to Rest from the Ashes of Burnout

Feeling rested is not valued or centred in contemporary society, and through each conversation alongside the literature, I have come wonder if that is because it is the antithesis of relentless productivity and outcome. Our collective sense-making throughout this project, alongside critical feminist literature, suggests that not only is being unrested exacerbated by contemporary patriarchal, neoliberal societal expectations and dominant narratives, but women are disproportionately negatively impacted. To truly centre rest and wellbeing, it is not only individuals who must shift and evolve, but also the dominant systems and narratives we live within and must negotiate every day. Neoliberal pressures to produce and achieve, gendered expectations of care and self-sacrifice, eurocentric ideals of time and efficiency, and heteronormative family structures that prescribe how life should unfold must be troubled and reimagined.

These systems and narratives are not just abstract concepts – they shape our everyday choices and sense of self-worth. The emerging understanding that it is necessary – and a privilege only available to a few – to make drastic changes in one's life to resist these social power relations is one we need to collectively challenge. Not everyone can quit a job, change careers, or access resources that make such resistances possible. Yet no woman should feel they *must* sacrifice themselves to survive by performing the role of 'good woman' under the dominant patriarchal gaze. As each woman showed us, a woman with access to time, unconstrained by imposed pressure, might become rested

and well – and a rested woman may be better able to recognize, challenge, and resist these exploitative demands and expectations.

The current neoliberal, capitalistic, androcentric dominant narratives are so systemically and institutionally embedded that it has become the air we breathe, the water we swim in – becoming rested increases our capacity as women to resist, disrupt, and reimagine how we traverse the confines of society. It is not a matter of women simply 'taking time' to rest more, it is about having the space to *feel* rested in the moment and navigate stressors more easefully. If we want to be rested and well, we must move toward a relationally caring society and a reimagined economy. For there to be any sustainable shift toward rest, balance, and wellbeing for women, we need a collective shift in how we think about, relate to, and support access to time and experiences of rest.

The shared insights from each woman highlight that becoming rested cannot be centred on making the lives of others easier and more fulfilling – the process of trying to please others is an exhaustive, exploited practice; in our experience of feeling rested, others are inherently better for it with no effort or sacrifice of self. Each woman has shown us that we already know, or can rather easily find out, what is restful and rejuvenating for us. What women need most is time and space from imposed demands and expectations, feeling rested can emanate from there – informing how she traverses her unique situated context in the best way for her.

Reflections and Transformations: Disrupting Narratives for a Rest-Rich Future

Each woman who chose to participate in this research is white, English-speaking, and middle-class; the knowledge co-created through this project is specific to these women and allows us to hear experiences of working, middle-class, time-poor women, with the privileges of whiteness and the marginalizations of gender inequities, social norms and expectations, and stereotypes that they are inscribed with. While this standpoint cannot account for crucial intersections of race, socioeconomics, and other marginalizations experienced by women, it is relevant for all working women who have had these systems of oppression and gender norms and expectations imposed on them. In the context of intersectionality within Aotearoa's history – steeped in colonization, andro and eurocentrism – there is certainly a need, and plenty of room, to explore this topic from other locations and standpoints

where women's struggles may be both the same and different yet ultimately silenced at the intersections of social power relations.

Continued research in this area could help expand and deepen our understanding of what it means for women to be rested and well while navigating and negotiating societal gendered power dynamics and dominant narratives. Many of the stories shared here are still silenced in contemporary society and inaccessibility to rest disproportionately negatively impacts multiply marginalized women; an intersectional approach is crucial for reimaging how women can engage in meaningful rest in respect to and support of their situated context. This project enables a continuation in exploring women's rest through the intersections of social power relations, possibly offering a glimmer of hope for those who continue to be silenced and multiply marginalized.

Throughout this exploration, I have often found myself wondering if a rested feminist might be more likely to embody an intersectional feminist approach to moving through the world; does rested feminism remind us that we do not have to play by the domineering, power-over, exploitative rules of the patriarchy? This removal of competition and disrupting the narrative of productivity over everything creates space for more relational ways of being that are more conducive to liberation for all. When we put aside the imposed expectations and demands of others, and all that we have internalized from them, we resist the disciplinary gaze and make choices that move us toward a collectively-minded and healthier future (Bartky, 1998; Cabanas, 2016; Vollebregt et al., 2024). This unassuming four-letter word that, for many, has been brushed under the rug, may just hold some of the answers to so many of the challenges and crises we face today.

Finding Myself Within Rest

The unfolding of this research led me down rabbit holes I could never have anticipated, ultimately leading to an existential exploration into myself and my own situated context and location. I often found myself asking, what is this life even for, what is the point of it all? From what I have learned and felt in my bones, sacrificing ourselves by working to achieve the impossible androcentric neoliberal dream is not the marker of a life well-lived, but it is a marker of burnout. As each woman reminded me, it is not that we need to – or even can – fit rest into current society; we must reclaim what is inherently meaningful through redefining and reimaging what this one life is for. Getting clear on what is most profoundly important to us, acknowledging and honouring that it is different from

person to person, and centring what allows us to live the life we are meant, and innately deserve, to live. When my hope dwindled in the face of one heartbreakingly devastating event after another – personally and globally – I welcomed in the words of each woman.

Their words continue to guide me inward toward my innate knowing of what will restore and rejuvenate me. Reminding me to find joy amongst the misery, hope amongst the despair, and boundless energy amongst the rest. For years, I have found that generative rest has served as both a personal act of resistance and a political rebellion against dominant societal expectations. When I am rested and replenished, I am better able to think clearly, expansively, and in alignment with my values, making decisions that support my wellbeing while also considering that of my proximal and wider community. I have noticed that these decisions often stand in stark contrast to the dominant societal narratives that glorify constant productivity, self-sacrifice, individualism, and linear achievement (Bettache, 2025; Han, 2015).

It has, at times, felt scary to write so boldly about a topic as simple as rest. I was meant to travel to the united states for a dear, dear friend's wedding the year Trump got re-elected. Because of this work – women's ability to access time and engage in meaningful rest – I was advised by multiple people to reconsider travelling there. As this presidency continues to unfold as it has, it has become increasingly unsafe to do so. Interestingly, this has emboldened me to use whatever reach this offering on rest might have to give voice to the quiet spaces and pockets of pause that have the ability to replenish, rejuvenate and nourish not-so-docile women who deserve a felt, embodied life of restful and enlivening moments. Restful moments that may just capacitate them to keep troubling, resisting, and reimaging.

What has surprised me most is the sense of self sufficiency that has surfaced, even in periods of intense personal and professional hardship and challenge. Rather than arising from external ease, contentment seemed to emerge from a relational grounding – a felt connection to my body, my environment, and the present moment. From a feminist relational-process ontology, this is a dynamic unfolding of being situated within and sustained by interdependent relations. Feminist relational-process ontology challenges the individualist and extractive logics of neoliberal consumerism. It foregrounds the idea that we are not isolated, self-contained subjects, but constantly in relation – with others, with systems, with stories, and with self. In this view, sufficiency is not something to be

acquired or achieved, but something that can be immanently sensed in the integrity of our ongoing, situated entanglements. Rest, then, is not just a personal resource or reward – it is a relational condition that makes space for presence, connection, and resistance. It allows for a different kind of knowing: one that does not demand more but allows us to be with what is already here.

Each pebble of wisdom was a treasure to receive and hold closely, reminding me that rest is how we sustain ourselves long term. It is how we bolster ourselves and wider community amidst these tumultuous and volatile times. Rest is how we soften into the best, most powerful version of ourselves. Throughout this journey of becoming rested alongside engaging in this project, I have taken many moments to be deeply present with the gift that is time – time to write, to learn, to relate, to unlearn, to challenge, to disrupt, to evolve and transform. Time to be so deeply connected with the present moment – whether joyful or sorrowful – is what I have come to believe this human experience is all about. This spaciousness that is *feeling rested* is not the threat the systems of oppression think it is – if anything, rested and well humans could potentially 'advance' in ways that support balance, sustainable acceleration, and collectively-beneficial progress – a future that centres rest and liberation for all just might thrive.

Where Might Rest Take Us

A rested me has not completely stepped out of neoliberal, late capitalism; I have, however, begun moving with it more intentionally; troubling, reimagining, and performing it differently every step of the way. As I approach the end of this exploration, it has been interesting to reflect on how I feel relatively rested. Even with the submission deadline looming, experiencing personal and professional challenges throughout this project, and navigating the current landscape of our global world, I *feel* inspired, hopeful, and genuinely rested. In the confronting truths, and moving to disentangle from the dominant patriarchal gaze, I have experienced moments of genuine rest that have capacitated me to keep troubling, questioning, and reimagining how a rested and well me moves through this world. Alongside the profound work of others who have opened pathways towards a more liberated future for all, I wonder what other pieces of boundary-pushing work and art we might see from women who are respected, supported, and have the resources to cover their basic needs so they can thrive.

This relational, emergent project has led me to understand rest as a sense of ease in whatever you are engaged in and an ability to restore after stressful experiences. This understanding of and engagement in rest troubles the dominating androcentric neoliberal systems that are desperately fighting to maintain 'superiority'. This approach – marked by relentless exertion and emotional overextension – replicates the unsustainable logics of productivity, self-sacrifice, and disposability embedded within the systems being challenged. The result is a cycle of chronic stress, particularly acute for women who are also managing intersecting domestic, professional, and myriad other responsibilities. Attempting to decolonize and reimagine structures of oppression from a state of depletion not only undermines the work itself but risks reinforcing the very dynamics of extraction and exhaustion that such efforts aim to resist (Bharj & Adams, 2023). Yet, as Hersey (2022) reminds us, *Rest is Resistance*.

Rest is the foundation upon which to build a world that is in harmonious relationship with self, other, and nature. To reclaim rest and, even more importantly, our right to be well, there must be a re-evaluation and re-defining of rest, its purpose, and our relationship to and engagement with it. Each woman spoke to how when they are truly rested – not striving to be rested but embodying it – they experience deeper presence in the moment and an internal sense of ease and contentment. Similarly, when I feel content, I find myself less susceptible to the dominant narratives of today's consumer culture – those that frame identity through lack, and define worth by accumulation, productivity, or self-optimization. In those moments, the impulse to purchase, improve, or attain more dissolves, giving way to a quieter awareness that I already have – and am – enough.

Some people expected this research to end with something like, '*Five Easy Ways to Feel More Rested'*, but, if this exploration has taught me anything, that is not possible – nor is it helpful. Rest cannot be diluted and made into a universal, one-size-fits-all commodity; it cannot be generalized and globalized. Rest must be felt. Rest must be moved with from the situated standpoint of each woman. I have come to sense that the more rested we become, the more *unrested* the systems will become – agitated by the very notion of women resisting *the way it has always been*. These systems will find ways to perpetuate the narrative that we are not enough, that we need to fix ourselves and become what is desired…and yet, I have a feeling that a rested woman will know this is not her truth; she will continue to traverse the terrains of colonized neoliberal capitalism, knowing she is more than enough.

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Appendix A

Information Sheet

Women's Everyday Experiences of Rest

INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction

Tēnā koe, my name is Amanda Hanna, and I am conducting this research for the fulfillment of requirements for a Master of Arts degree, under the supervision of Dr Ann Rogerson from the School of Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North. I have been working full-time as an educator and trainer for the past 8 years while also balancing life, school and everything in between. As a result, I have become deeply interested in women's experience of rest in today's world.

Invitation

You are invited to take part in a research project to understand women's everyday experiences of rest while balancing work life, family life and other commitments. You will have received this information sheet from a trusted community member who feels you fit the criteria and may be interested in being a part of my research project and sharing your story with me.

If you are a self-identified woman over 30 years old, currently living in Hawke's Bay and feel comfortable speaking English, you are most welcome to take part if you so choose.

Research project:

I would like to talk to you about how you experience rest in a busy world where there seems to be less and less time for ourselves and how this affects us as women.

As we talk, I will be recording our conversations, and they will collectively contribute to a better understanding of how we as women negotiate our busy lives on a daily basis and how we might achieve meaningful rest.

What this study will involve:

If you decide you want to share your story, please contact me and we will talk through the research project, and any requirements you might have, for example, cultural considerations and whether you prefer to meet in person or online. Should you wish to continue, we will organize a time and a place for our conversation to take place. I will ask you to sign a form consenting to participate before our conversation and recording begins. Our conversations may take around an hour, or longer depending on if you wish to meet at a place of your choice, such as an outdoor space, or you would prefer to meet at your house.

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Project procedures:

If you decide to participate, it is important to us that you have a clear understanding of the research purpose and process. This will be carefully explained to you at the initial discussion, and I can address any questions you might have.

Participating in this research is confidential, and your privacy will be protected throughout. If you consent, the conversations will be digitally audio-recorded and stored in a password-protected format. I will transcribe the conversations myself or they will be transcribed via an inbuilt software, depending on if we meet in person or via zoom. You will be provided with a written digital format and the opportunity to read, contemplate, discuss and make edits to the transcripts. No identifying material will be transcribed. Once you have read your transcript, if you choose to, we can meet to discuss any changes you might make or any thoughts you want to add.

Once you are happy with the transcripts, I will ask you to sign a Transcript Release Form and return the transcript to me. The choice to participate is voluntary and you can withdraw from the study if you wish up until the transcript release form has been signed.

You will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym (fake name) if you wish, otherwise one will be allocated to you. The digital audio recording will be deleted after transcription. Digital notes will be kept in a password-protected format until my thesis has been graded at which point the notes will also be destroyed. Any paper consent forms and transcript release forms will be kept securely in a separate location from the transcripts in the School of Psychology, Palmerston North, for a minimum of five years. Otherwise, digital copies will be stored within Massey's OneDrive for five years. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the consent forms, transcripts, and notes, and will participate in the analysis of our conversations. Once the research is completed, if you would like me to, I can contact you to discuss the outcome of the research and/or provide a summary of findings.

All information obtained in this study will be treated confidentially. In the unlikely event our discussions about our everyday lives raise questions for you that you may not have otherwise considered, we can continue our discussions unrecorded or through consultation with my supervisor and suggest avenues for support if you feel this would be helpful. I will provide a list of support services available as well.

Participants' Rights:

Although you have been given this information you are under no obligation to accept the invitation. However, if you would like to participate you have the right to:

- Not discuss any topic or answer any question that you would rather not talk about
- Ask questions regarding the study at any point in the process
- Understand the process thoroughly
- Understand that your name or identifiable information will not be used
- Have time to read, consider, discuss and edit the transcripts prior to analysis
- Ask for the audio tape to be stopped at any point during our conversation
- Have a summary of the research findings when the research finishes
- Withdraw from the research at any point up until you have signed the release of transcript form

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Massey University Human Ethics by email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. Participating in this research is voluntary and confidential. The person who gave you the sheet does not need to know if you intend to contact me and I will not tell them who contacts me. If you decide you would like to participate or discuss the research with me in person, please contact me either via email, phone or text and we can arrange an initial meeting, either face to face, phone or Zoom, to talk through the research process.

Ngā mihi nui,

Amanda Hanna

Researcher Contact details

Amanda Hanna: 021 186 4155, aehanna55@gmail.com

Ann Rogerson: (06) 356 9099, ext. 85052, A.L.Rogerson@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B

Participant consent form

Women's Everyday Experiences of Rest

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

By signing this participant consent form, I agree that I have:

- Read and understood the information sheet.
- Had the details of the study explained to me.
- Had any questions that I may have answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.
- Been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time up until the transcript release form has been signed.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Massey University Human Ethics by email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Participant Declaration:

I _____[print full name] hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Appendix C

Authority for release of transcript form

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Women's Everyday Experiences of Rest

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the conversation conducted with me for this study.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name (printed): _____

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