Conversing and Conforming: Small Business Owners' Lived Experiences of Family Communication Patterns in Their Youth. A Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

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Abstract

Small businesses are critical to the healthy functioning of the New Zealand economy. Due to the scale of these businesses, owners are typically heavily involved in the operations of their business. There is significant value in understanding the lived experiences of small New Zealand business owners during their formative years, as this contributes greatly to how they perceive and interact with the world today. However, limited research to date has been concerned with the childhood experiences of small business owners, and even less exists in a New Zealand context. Using Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory, this study aims to address this gap by asking how the family communication patterns experienced in early life may have impacted on the lived experiences of small New Zealand business owners. Taking a qualitative approach to this often quantitatively geared theory, a phenomenological theoretical framework was engaged while using reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to explore the lived experiences of eight small business owners. These business owners live and were raised in New Zealand, and now own businesses of less than 20 staff, placing this study in a uniquely New Zealand context. Through enacting RTA, six themes were generated from the small business owners' experiences: (1) Independence from an Early Age, (2) Religiosity and Associated Values, (3) Nuanced Family Dynamics, (4) Conforming to Authority, (5) New Zealand: An Emotionally Guarded Culture, and (6) Rejecting or Emulating Family Practices. The findings depict the lived experiences of small business owners to be characterised by independence from an early age, which is tied into resilience built from overcoming adversity, as well as problem solving and self-efficacy. Also indicated in the findings is the important grounding of religiously oriented family communication, as well as the culturally situated discomfort individuals feel disclosing their feelings and emotions. Finally, it is evident that childhood experiences of family communication continue to have a great impact in the lives of the small business owners today.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Small businesses are integral to the sustainability and vitality of New Zealand's economy. The country's 546,000 small businesses constitute 97% of all existing companies, with New Zealand depending on them for over a quarter of its employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2023). Defined by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) as having less than 20 staff (MBIE, 2023), the scale of small businesses means that owners are often heavily involved with the day-to-day operations, management, staffing, and finances of their business. Successful small business owners are important for the healthy functioning of the New Zealand economy.

This research investigates small business owners' lived experiences via qualitative methods. Researchers have used qualitative methods to analyse different elements of SME owners' lived experiences. Phenomenology is a frequently used approach; Bann (2009), Lewis (2009), Verheijen (2018), and Ndlovu and Schutte (2023) used it to explore different parts of the entrepreneurial experience, from starting up (Bann, 2009) to tax compliance (Ndlovu & Schutte, 2023). Alternatively, Singh et al. (2015) took a narrative approach to discover what stigmatisation was experienced by business owners with failed ventures. However, no research exists to the knowledge of the author that explores small New Zealand business owners' childhood experiences of family communication. Formative childhood communicative experiences are hugely impactful and often determine a lot of who we become (Cappella, 1991; Singer, 2017). According to Buzzanell et al. (2012), children are influenced in their attitudes about the desirability of different types of work from as early as two to three years old. Thus, using a phenomenological framework, I set out to qualitatively explore the lived experiences of small New Zealand business owners through their recollections of family communication from their youth, including during childhood and adolescence.

I grounded my research in Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory, which acknowledges that children are socialised to the world through parental communication behaviours (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Traditionally, FCP theory has used quantitative methods to ask *what* family communication patterns are being experienced and assess the causal relationship between those patterns and another variable area of life. However, some researchers have extended the possibilities of this theory and adapted it for qualitative research (Sellnow-Richmond et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2021). Using a similar approach, I took the questions used in the heavily cited Revised Family

Communication Patterns instrument (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990) and adapted them to guide the interview schedule I used for in-depth semi-structured interviews. This allowed me to push deeply into the lived experiences of the participants to explore *how* they have experienced family communication patterns and *why* this continues to be impactful for them today. In undergoing this research journey, I was guided by the central question: What are the lived experiences of small New Zealand business owners based on their recollections of the family communication patterns they experienced growing up?

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature that currently exists examining Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory and small business ownership in New Zealand. The review first explores early research around family communication to determine that FCP theory is the framework that is best suited to my research. After establishing this, the review then moves into what FCP theory is, including a more detailed overview of its history, how it has evolved, and how it is used contemporarily. Focus then moves on to small business for the rest of the review. This includes literature looking at the evolution of small business within the New Zealand context, how parents influence (or deter from) the pursuit of business ownership, and qualitative explorations of the lived experiences of small business owners.

2.1. Early Family Communication Research

According to Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1993), early research on family communication focused largely on interpersonal or mass communication. Contemporary models of communication have existed since 1949 with the basic, linear theorisations of Shannon and Weaver (as cited in Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993). However, Fitzpatrick and Ritchie noted that interest in the family within the communication discipline specifically (as opposed to other disciplines in the social sciences) did not come until later. The rising popularisation of the television within households during the 1950s led mass communication scholars to take an interest in parent-child communication. Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1993) noted that these researchers sought to examine how the family, as the primary socialisation agent for the child, now competed with this new direct source of political and commercial socialisation. Concurrently, interpersonal researchers were usually more interested in the marital relationship within the family unit, rather than the parent-child relationship. In their review, Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1993) grouped early theories under three metaphors that they felt encapsulated much of the family communication research up to that point: “The Family is a Private Miniculture” (p. 574), “The Family is a Resource Exchange System” (p. 578), and “The Family is a Set of Relationships” (p. 580).

2.1.1. Private Miniculture Metaphor

The Private Miniculture metaphor hinges on how families take for granted a shared set of values, opinions, ideologies, beliefs, and practices (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993). To each family, their familial assumptions are ‘normal’ and anything outside of their own system would be considered abnormal. According to Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1993), these attributes that make up an independent family

miniculture are important because they allow individuals in the family to predict how other members are going to act. Therefore, each member can implicitly know how they are expected to interact and engage with situational family communication behaviors.

Family Communications Pattern (FCP) theory sits under the Private Miniculture metaphor (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993). Developed by McLeod and Chaffee (1972, 1973), the theory is underpinned by how similarly people within the family feel (termed mutuality), how they perceive this similarity (termed congruence), and how accurate this perception is (termed accuracy). As mass communication scholars, McLeod and Chaffee had a particular interest in the parent-child relationship and how parents influence their children's interaction with, and consumption of, mass media messaging (McLeod & Chaffee, 1971). In their original development of FCP theory, they created two dimensions labeled socio-orientation and concept-orientation. Socio-orientation referred to how members of the family would defer to one authoritative voice on how to perceive stimuli such as media messaging. Conversely, concept-orientation families could reach an agreement about a subject matter through open conversation. Different scholars have since clarified, refined, and extended upon the Family Communication Patterns theory (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Ritchie 1988; 1991). In modern usage, FCP theory is used to analyse many different factors of the parent-child and other familial relationships, beyond mass-media communication (see Section 2.3. for examples).

Within interpersonal communication, Fitzpatrick's (1990) typology of the marital unit can also be categorized under the Private Miniculture metaphor. Fitzpatrick reasoned that every marriage is defined by communication and underscored by a belief system that presents unique communication events. However, marriages can also be typified within Fitzpatrick's (1990) Relational Dimensions Instrument (RDI), falling under one of the following categories: "Traditional, Independent or Separate" (p. 441). In a Traditional marriage, the duo is interdependent, given to traditional views on marriage and the family, and will argue over important topics. Contrarily, those characterized as Independent are less interdependent, hold more progressive views on the family, and frequently argue. Separates are more extreme again, showcasing little interdependence, little care for the values of the family, and little conflict due to avoidance.

Finally, Reiss's (1981) research into how families process information and his subsequent theory on Family Paradigms fits under the 'Private Miniculture' metaphor as well. Contrary to how the Relational Dimensions Instrument and Family Communication Patterns theory rely on participants' self-assessment, in Reiss's research the Family Paradigms theory employs the researcher to observe how a family responds to a controlled problem-solving challenge. The performance of the family members is compared through an individual and group test, which assesses how the family

approaches problem-solving, ultimately determining the 'paradigm' they fall within. The assessment is along three dimensions which Reiss devised, including 'Configuration' (how the family interacts to solve the problem), 'Coordination' (the level to which members develop similar solutions), and 'Closure' (how the family collectively makes sense of the task at hand). Reiss (1981) argued that a family's paradigm is fixed unless they are presented with a crisis where they would have to explicitly unpack their implicit familial assumptions and reassess them. In everyday life, outside of a crisis, the structural fabric of the family is reinforced and reproduced in the tacit rhythms of their routines and rituals.

2.1.2. Resource Exchange Metaphor

Communication as the negotiating medium through which families provide each other with resources is the basis of the Resource Exchange Metaphor (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993). Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1993) elaborated that it can also be communication itself that is the resource which is exchanged and, based on that premise, some early theories of family communication fall within this metaphor.

Aligned with this metaphor, the Coercive Family Process Theory seeks to understand aggressive behaviour in children through the communicative exchanges that perpetuate their behaviour (Patterson, 1982, as cited in Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993). According to Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1993), research for this theory is based on the "Family Interaction Coding System (FICS)" (p. 579), an observational method that appraises a behaviour and the consequent response from the family. Behaviours are coded as either aversive or prosocial. A key focus within the theory is negative reinforcement, wherein aversive behaviour is reinforced by, for example, acquiescence to whinging and tantrums. Extending his theory further, Patterson has since looked earlier at the infant/parent relationship, and how even at this stage behaviours are reinforced through communicative exchanges (Patterson, 2002). For example, the infant's aversive cry coerces the predictable reaction of the parent appearing, while the parent's smile positively reinforces the infant's cooing response.

Outside of the parent/child relationship, marital discourse and how it either adds to or detracts from satisfaction in the marriage constitutes another resource exchange worthy of scholarly attention. Examining this concept, Gottman (1979) unpacked a 'Structural Model of Marriage Interaction' (p. 72), offering four hypotheses that have since been empirically supported (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993). Through these hypotheses Gottman posited that, compared to their happily married counterparts, unhappily married couples are more inflexible, more expressively negative in their communication, more likely to reciprocate negative messaging, and more imbalanced in their dominance. According to Gottman (1979), the Structural Model also contains three dimensions of

"negative affect, negative affect reciprocity, and dominance" (p. xii). These dimensions focused on negative interactions and how they are reciprocated, as well as individual dominance in those interactions.

2.1.3. Set of Relationships Metaphor

Fitzpatrick and Ritchie's (1993) final metaphor focuses on the family unit as the sum of its relational parts. Under this model, family communication is made up of the interactions within the interconnected family network, with each interaction both being impacted by previous exchanges and impacting future exchanges. Fitzpatrick and Ritchie (1993) argued that theories that view the family as the constitution of their relationships assume that discourse is what affirms and directs those relationships.

One early theory that fits under the relationships metaphor is that of relational control (Baumgartner et al., 1975; Manderscheid et al., 1982). Relational control research is focused on verbal exchanges that expose who is exercising control. While relational control theory encompasses the family relationship, it can also extend to look at social relationships beyond the family unit. However, within a family context, relational control theory looks at interpersonal dyadic exchanges, such as Manderscheid et al.'s (1982) research on relational control in spousal interactions. Manderscheid et al. used a Markov model (wherein each occurrence depends on the previous one) to analyse relational control in eight married couples and examine the cumulative effect of subsequent interactions on behaviour and, thus, control. Conversely, other early researchers who used a relational control model took a more macro approach to exploring how it affects social fragmentation, power dynamics within groups, and systemic control (Baumgartner et al., 1975).

2.1.4. Summary of Early Family Communication Research

Most early research on family communication took an exclusive focus on either the parent/child dynamic or the marital relationship. Interpersonal marital communication often looked at conflict or negative discourse as a measure of satisfaction in the marriage (Fitzpatrick, 1990; Gottman 1979; Manderscheid et al.'s, 1982). In contrast, research focused on the parent/child relationship prioritised how parents influence their children through communication events and how the family operates under their normative system (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993; McLeod & Chaffee, 1971; Reiss, 1981).

For this research, the aim is to explore the family communication experiences small business owners had growing up, which naturally brings attention to the parent/child dynamic. Further, as shared ideologies and beliefs within the family unit continue to impact life experiences in adulthood, it

makes sense to focus on a theory that falls within the Private Miniculture Metaphor. Therefore, the Family Paradigms theory is discounted, as it relies on the researcher's observation of the family in question, whereas this current research is interested in the childhood recollections of current business owners. Family Communication Patterns theory fits a phenomenological approach, with the self-assessment element allowing for reflection on past experiences. FCP theory also provides clear dimensions by which to analyse and gauge these experiences, to further unpack their meaning. Consequently, FCP theory is pursued as the guiding framework for this research, since it is well suited to the research aim.

2.2. History of Family Communication Patterns Theory

Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory was originally developed in the early 1970s by mass communication scholars McLeod and Chaffee (1972, 1973) to explore how children are socialised to the external world through their parents; their particular interest was in mass media messaging. In creating FCP theory McLeod and Chaffee (1973) used "The Newcomb (1953) co-orientation model" (p. 474) to explain how people evaluate and make sense of the same stimuli or experience. Within the concept of co-orientation, agreement refers to how closely people's perception of the same stimuli or experience aligns. Leveraging off this, McLeod and Chaffee (1972, 1973) argued that agreement can be reached within families through deferring to one member's opinion of the stimuli or experience, with the intention to maintain internal harmony and agreeableness. They labelled this dimension of family communication 'socio-orientation'. McLeod and Chaffee also posited that, alternatively, agreement can be reached within families through discourse about that stimuli, so that members (with a particular focus on children) could learn to independently establish a considered perspective on the stimuli or experience. This dimension was labelled 'concept-orientation'.

FCP was later revised by Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Ritchie, 1988, 1991) to extend beyond how messages from the mass media are received and instead accommodate how the family responds to an array of stimuli. In their Revised Family Communication Patterns (RFCP) instrument, 'socio-orientation' was redefined as 'conformity orientation', while 'concept-orientation' was redefined as 'conversation orientation' (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Ritchie 1988; 1991). In explanation, Ritchie (1991) contended that the parental power exerted within the 'socio-orientation' dimension more accurately demanded conformity than interpersonal harmony. Instead, 'concept-orientation' was more apt to foster harmonious connection; Ritchie argued that it had more to do with egalitarian conversation than with conceptual dialogic exchanges. Conformity and conversation orientation are crucial elements of RFCP.

2.2.1. Conformity Orientation

Within RFCP theory, conformity orientation is characterised by intra-family worldviews and perceptions that conform with those held by the parents or other hierarchically dominant members (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2002b, 2006; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014; Schrodt et al., 2008). The upper extreme of this dimension involves families who will prioritise conflict avoidance over free expression (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Children and younger generations have less authority and are expected to be obedient and acquiescent (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). According to Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006), families high on the conformity orientation scale are very traditional in structure and will esteem family relationships above any others held outside of their family unit. At the other end of the scale, low conformity orientation families encourage independence, expression of differing opinions, and equality between generational viewpoints (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). These families have strong relationships outside of the family and support individual success at the expense of the strength of the family unit.

2.2.2. Conversation Orientation

Converse in nature to the conformity orientation dimension, the conversation orientation dimension refers to how open and uninhibited discourse within the family is (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2002b, 2006; Schrodt et al., 2008; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). If families fall on the upper end of the conversation orientation dimension, then all family members are encouraged to actively express their feelings and opinions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Consideration will be given to all opinions, including that of children, before decisions are reached (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Conversations between family members occur regularly and spontaneously and will broach a wide range of topics (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). A high conversation orientation also signals the belief that open communication is the primary means through which parents can socialise their children to the world around them (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006). In contrast, families falling on the other end of this dimension will not routinely communicate with each other and will avoid certain topics (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). The free flow of ideas is not actively encouraged, and opinions will not be equally sought before decisions are made (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). Free expression and discussion are not seen as necessary to socialise children to the world (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a).

2.2.3. Family Communication Structures Through Dimension Interaction

Conformity and conversation orientation rarely manifest in isolation, but rather interact with each other to create communication outcomes within the family (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2006; Koerner &

Schrodt, 2014). To illustrate this McLeod and Chaffee (1972) posited a “four-fold typology of family communication” (p. 84) and this labelling has remained unchanged within the Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument. According to this typology families can be categorised as consensual, pluralistic, protective, or laissez-faire.

2.2.3.1. Consensual Families

Families who are consensual are placed on the upper end of both the conformity and conversation orientation dimensions (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2006; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). Within the family there are competing expectations to both agree with the dominant perspective while also exploring individual ideas; respect for traditional family hierarchy is to be maintained, while free expression of thought is also encouraged (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a). McLeod and Chaffee (1972) argue that this underlying tension between both dimensions often causes children to take the easiest route of accepting their parents’ perspectives. Agreeing with this, Koerner and Schrodt (2014) claim that children generally end up embracing the attitudes and value systems of their parents.

2.2.3.2. Pluralistic Families

Families falling within the pluralistic category are on the lower end of the conformity orientation dimension and the upper end of the conversation orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2006; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). These families encourage unconstrained communication and spontaneous, free expression of ideas (McLeod & Chaffee, 1972). Ideas are accepted based on their quality, rather than who has espoused them, giving children equal advantage in family decisions and accepted ideologies (Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). According to Koerner & Schrodt (2014) since there is no expectation to conform to the attitudes and values of parental or hierarchical authority, there is little to no conflict avoidance. Thus, disagreements are usually resolved quickly through positive dialogic approaches.

2.2.3.3. Protective Families

The inverse of pluralistic families, protective families are on the upper end of the conformity orientation dimension and the lower end of the conversation orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2006; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). Obedience is expected from children and younger generations, conflict is avoided, and conversation is constrained to safe topics (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2006; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). McLeod and Chaffee (1972) used the label ‘protective’ to reflect what families hoped to achieve through this pattern of communication, rather than what is truly accomplished, which is often acquiescence to the dominant family ideologies.

2.2.3.4. Laissez-Faire Families

Falling on the lower end of both conformity and conversation orientation dimensions, laissez-faire families are characterised by limited communication and interest in each other (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2006; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). Members of these families have little emotional connection to each other, and the dearth of communication tends to result in conflict avoidance (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002a, 2006; Koerner & Schrodt, 2014). McLeod and Chaffee (1972) claim that children in laissez-faire families are often highly influenced by sources outside of the family. Extending upon this, Koerner and Schrodt (2014) highlighted that children compensate for the insufficient parental support by adopting their peers' ideas on decisions.

2.3. Contemporary Usage of Family Communication Patterns Theory

Recent research has used FCP theory to explore the influence of family communication patterns on an expansive range of topics including religion (Fife et al., 2014); financial conversations (Hanson & Olsen, 2018; Miller et al., 2021, Schrodt et al., 2023; Thorson & Kranstuber Horstman, 2014); entrepreneurship (Soleimanof et al., 2021); military deployment effects on children (Wilson et al., 2014); substance misuse (Kemp et al., 2024); conflict (Shearman & Dumlao, 2008; Sillars et al., 2014); romantic relationships (Fowler et al., 2010; Jiao, 2021; Whittington & Turner, 2024; Young & Schrodt, 2016); sibling relationships (Hall & McNallie, 2016; Samek & Rueter, 2011; Schrodt & Phillips, 2016); privacy boundaries (Ledbetter, 2019); co-parental communication (Schrodt & Shimkowski, 2017); technologically mediated family relationships (Buehler et al., 2022; McNallie & Getters, 2023); political conversations (Scruggs & Schrodt, 2020); mental health and wellbeing (Schrodt, 2020; Segrin et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023); family discussions about sex (Hurst et al., 2022; Morrissey et al., 2023); COVID-19 issues (Egbert et al. 2022; Gong et al., 2023; Hall et al., 2022), medical challenges (Ramazanu et al., 2022); communication about Family Health History (Watts & Hovick, 2023); gender and sexual identity (Schrodt & Decker, 2023; Sellnow-Richmond et al., 2015); resilience (Boumis et al., 2023); trait autonomy (Jiao et al., 2023); internet addiction (Nikdel & Nasab, 2023); and body weight concerns (Kauer & Burke, 2023). Current usage of the theory indicates that it has become acceptable to use the terms 'Family Communication Patterns' and 'Revised Family Communication Patterns' interchangeably while only referring to conformity and conversation orientation. The original terms 'socio-orientation' and 'concept orientation' are seldom used in contemporary FCP theory based research.

Contemporary studies use FCP theory as a predictive means to discover associations between conformity and conversation orientation in families and the variable topic in question. For example, Fife et al. (2014) found a strong link between firm religious beliefs and growing up in high conversation orientation and high conformity orientation families; Wilson et al. (2014) found that high conversation orientation was positively associated with children having fewer behavioural problems when their military parents returned home; Hurst et al. (2022) found that adolescents from pluralistic families were the most likely to involve themselves in safe sexual practices when compared to other family communication pattern types. In their meta-analysis, Schrodt et al. (2008) found a "small, but meaningful" causal relationship between family communication patterns and various outcomes in their research (p. 262). They continued on to assert that a strong association exists between conversation and conformity orientations and how parents interact with their children about "everything" from religion to politics to advertising to self-disclosure (p. 262).

The recent studies drawing causal associations rely on quantitative analysis. They often use questionnaires and the Revised Family Communication Patterns instrument (discussed in Section 2.4) in their methodology, citing either Ritchie and Fitzpatrick (1990) or Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2002b) (Fife et al., 2014; Thorson & Horston, 2014; Sillars et al., 2014; Young & Schrodt, 2014; Nikdel & Nasab, 2023). However, some studies have introduced qualitative analysis into their research using FCP theory (Sellnow-Richmond et al., 2015; Schell et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2021). For example, for their research on how families impact gender identity, Sellnow-Richmond et al. (2015) conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews guided by grounded theory. The questions in their interviews were structured to reveal what FCPs their participants experienced growing up. Schell et al. (2020) also conducted semi-structured interviews and used six case studies to explore the succession of family businesses through FCP theory. Finally, Miller et al. (2021) took a mixed methods approach and placed greater emphasis of their qualitative research when using FCP theory to unpack how families communicate about student loans. Their 62 participants completed a questionnaire and then participated in a focus group. These examples demonstrate that FCP theory can be used as a baseline for research that presses beyond association between family communication patterns and outcomes, to explore the why and how.

Dialogue around FCP theory has also grown to encompass the applicability of the theory itself and how far it extends. For example, Rauscher et al. (2020b) found that family communication patterns are intergenerational. Their research concluded that conformity or conversation orientation is transmitted to the extent that the family communication patterns of one generation is predictive of

that of both their children and grandchildren. They determined this by surveying 188 young adults and both their parents and grandparents, using the questions in the RFCP scale (discussed in Section 2.4). Additionally, Hesse et al. (2017) have proposed integrating cold and warm conformity into discussions of family communication patterns, arguing that the current notion of conformity is too narrow and negative. Warm conformity recognises that parents can uphold rules and promote their values and beliefs without there being adverse effects on their children's wellbeing. McNallie and Getters (2023) adopted this expanded idea of 'cold' and 'warm' conformity in their study on technologically mediated grandparent and grandchild relationships, while Rauscher et al. (2020a) have used it while investigating patient perceptions of their involvement in their medical care.

2.4. Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument

As detailed in section 2.1., a variety of tools have been employed by communication researchers to assess family communication; the Relational Dimensions Instrument (Fitzpatrick, 1990), Family Interaction Coding System (Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1993), and Markov model (Manderscheid et al., 1982) are among a few. However, for Family Communications Pattern theory the most prominent, widely cited tool is the Revised Family Communication Patterns Instrument (RFCP instrument – sometimes called RFCP scale) (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Ritchie, 1991; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994; Rauscher et al., 2020b).

The RFCP instrument is a self-report questionnaire, wherein participants in the study convey agreement or disagreement with 26 statements (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b); this is generally across either a five or seven point scale (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b; Savita Gupta, 2019). There is a separate, albeit extremely similar, set of questions for children and parents (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). The statements cover topics such as how the family in question discusses politics and religion, how open they are with emotions, how often they talk about the future together and what expectations there are around obedience. If agreement is expressed with the first fifteen questions this is indicative of high conversation orientation (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). Conversely, if agreement is expressed with the latter 11 questions then there are clear linkages to conformity orientation.

Given that the Likert scale allows for the collection and comparison of large volumes of data, the RFCP instrument is best suited to quantitative research. However, with researchers now using FCP theory as inspiration to create in-depth interview questions that suit qualitative research (Sellnow-Richmond et al., 2015), it is clear that the RFCP instrument can act as a foundation that informs a

deeper line of questioning. I decided that it is sensible to adapt a reputable and widely used tool for my own research (Ritchie & Fitzpatrick, 1990; Ritchie, 1991; Fitzpatrick & Ritchie, 1994). Following the example set by other qualitative and mixed method researchers (Sellnow-Richmond et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2021), I used it as the basis of my interview schedule while allowing a semi-structured style to create space for the conversations to push into other areas (discussed further in Chapter 3 – Methodology).

After examining family communication research and the tools that have been employed by researchers, it is evident that FCP theory and a qualitative adaptation of the RFCP instrument would best serve the purposes of my own research. With this established, it is vital to move into an assessment of how small business ownership is experienced, particularly in the New Zealand context and through previous qualitative analysis.

2.5. Small Business in the New Zealand Context

As my research is focused on the lived childhood communicative experiences of small New Zealand business owners, it is contextually reliant on what small business ownership means in a uniquely New Zealand landscape. In the previous sections it was important to unpack that family communication experiences are going to be explored through Family Communication Pattens theory. Equally as critical now is to move into an exploration of the political and economic backdrop of small business ownership in New Zealand. This will lay out why the country's business environment is the way it is and enable understanding as to the motivation behind business ownership in the first place.

The New Zealand government defines small businesses as for profit organisations with under 20 employees (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2023). Historically, small businesses were not esteemed for their contributions to the economy when compared to large businesses (Jurado & Battisti, 2019). According to Jurado and Battisti, it was not until 1978 that New Zealand established the first policy programme that recognised the different needs of small businesses through the Small Business Agency (SBA). This came at a time when the government had many protectionist measures in place for business, including spending six percent of its budget on agriculture subsidies, setting high tariffs, and controlling wages and prices (Jurado & Battisti, 2019; Rudd, 2001). For owners of small businesses that existed during the time of the SBA, the agency was confirmation that the government was protecting them from external competition (Jurado & Battisti, 2019). However, there was concern that these businesses were becoming too reliant on government assistance and not focusing on increasing their competitiveness.

The New Zealand government completely inverted its approach to interacting with small businesses after Labour was elected in 1984 (Rudd, 2001; Jurado & Battisti, 2019). Pressure for change had been mounting due to high unemployment numbers and exorbitant inflation. According to Rudd (2001), Labour took radical measures such as wiping price controls, switching the exchange rate from fixed to floating, and selling many of their government-owned enterprises. Thus, the neoliberal deregulation of the economy in 1984 signalled the start of the government's hands off approach to small business (Bertram, 2021; McEwan & Mollgaard, 2021). To the dismay of some, the SBA was disestablished in 1987 because the government decided that "businesses were best served by businesses themselves" (Jurado & Battisti, 2019, p. 42). The Labour government's neoliberal reforms supposed that the pain felt by some would be temporary and was the cost of greater economic productivity (Bertram, 2021); in this new sink or swim environment, about one third of businesses sank (Jurado & Battisti, 2019).

By the late 1980s there was ministerial acknowledgment that small businesses were not prospering under the Labour government's reforms (Jurado & Battisti, 2019). The next National government, while still taking the neoliberal approach of its predecessors, reintroduced some government support in 1990 through business development boards (BDBs) (Jurado & Battisti, 2019). The BDBs were disestablished in 1998, and that same year the BIZ programme to support small businesses was introduced. Thus, while the extreme deregulation of the economy in 1984 had effects that are still felt by some today (Bertram, 2021), successive governments have been intentional about the regulatory policies and support they have reintroduced. When the next Labour government was elected in 1999, they acknowledged the importance of small businesses for the economic and social success of the country, and their policies reflected this (Jurado & Battisti, 2019). By the mid-2000s small businesses were considered vital to the economy.

More recently, in 2018, another Labour government set up the Small Business Council, which created the New Zealand Small Business Strategy in 2019 (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2023). This strategy provided advice to the New Zealand government regarding how to enable the country's small businesses to prosper. In 2020, Covid-19 had an extensive negative impact on small businesses, with the enforced closure of the country's borders and a series of lockdowns. The Labour government offered support and relief for small businesses through measures such as wage subsidies and the Small Business Cashflow Scheme that provided interest free loans (Duncan, 2020). Post-Covid, small businesses have been acknowledged by the government as being critical to New Zealand's economic recovery through the incomes, goods, and services they provide (Ministry of

Business, Innovation & Employment, 2023). According to the Statistics New Zealand Annual Enterprise Survey 2020, New Zealand's small businesses made up 97% of all businesses and 41% of the economy's value (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2021). These small businesses had provided employment for 679,000 people, with employees on a $54,602 annual income on average. It should be noted that the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (2021) signalled that the less people employed by a business the less likely it is to survive. That said, the government agency also stated small business mortality had been steady over the past ten years, whereas the amount of start-ups had increased significantly.

2.6. Parental Influence on Small Business Ownership

Since parents are the primary socialisation agents for their children to the external world, the natural assumption is that business owners will produce entrepreneurial offspring (Lindquist et al., 2015). For example, Lindquist et al. (2015) claimed that the single biggest determinant of entrepreneurship is whether the individual's parents were entrepreneurs themselves. However, there is also evidence that parental influence is not predicted by simply exposing their children to business ownership, but rather by whether that exposure is positive or negative. Children who witness their parents engaging in highly rewarding business enterprises and being passionate about what they do are likely to have entrepreneurial aspirations (Wang et al., 2018; Soleimanof et al., 2021). Conversely, a negative perception may be fostered by parents that reveal the pressures and disadvantages that come with business ownership, which would otherwise not be realised by the child (Wang et al., 2018; Soleimanof et al., 2021). Supporting this concept on the influence of positive exposure, Carr and Sequeira (2007) also uncovered that a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship and business ownership is intergenerational; exposure to business ownership is accompanied by the transmission of values and beliefs about it. Expanding upon this, they found that entrepreneurial aspirations are additionally rooted in having family support and a compelling sense of belief in the likelihood of personal success.

Using Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory, Soleimanof et al. (2021) discovered that families high in conversation orientation are likely to pass a passionate disposition towards entrepreneurship onto their children, whereas those high in conformity orientation are unlikely to. They argue that this is because high conversation pattern environments can reinforce passion through open, frank, and democratic discussion. Conversely, children who grow up in high conformity orientation families are less likely to have the characteristics of an entrepreneur, such as a disposition towards risk tasking, creativity, and social adeptness. That said, when patterns of conformity are met with high

conversation orientation, as is the case with consensual families, this has the largest influence over children adopting positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship (Soleimanof et al., 2021). This is because the positive attitudes that are fostered through open discussion are complemented by high levels of internal support within the family unit.

2.7. Lived Experiences of Small Business Owners

Researchers have explored different lived experiences of small business owners through qualitative, often phenomenological, methodological approaches. For example, Bann (2009) investigated the lived experiences of entrepreneurs when starting their businesses and found that entrepreneurship is a meaningful personal journey often tied to self-actualisation and a desire to make a difference. Supporting this, Lewis (2009) also discovered that young entrepreneurs in New Zealand form deep emotional attachments to their enterprises. Focusing on a different element of business owners' lived experiences, Cueto et al. (2022) looked into how young entrepreneurs engage with digital innovations during disruptive economic periods. Leveraging off the widely shared disruptive experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, Cueto et al. concluded that both intrinsic and extrinsic entrepreneurial motivations lead to digital transformation and innovation to survive. In another niche study, Ndlovu and Schutte (2023) analysed small business owners' experiences of low compliance in paying tax. They found that small business owners often do not have the fundamental tax knowledge needed to correctly comply on their own. All of these qualitative studies used in-depth interviews for data collation, with various sample sizes of up to 46 participants. Unfortunately, there is currently a dearth of research examining the childhood experiences of small business owners; to my knowledge only one study exists in a Chinese context using quantitative longitudinal survey data, finding that negative experiences in childhood adversely impact entrepreneurship later in life (Zhao & Li, 2022).

Many qualitative researchers have also explored the experiences of business owners in a uniquely New Zealand context. For example, Singh et al. (2015) used a narrative approach to delve into the stigma small New Zealand business owners have experienced when their ventures have failed. Singh et al. found that these experiences can be transformative and produce profound insights that ultimately result in future business ventures. The entrepreneurial experiences of migrant women in New Zealand have also been explored; Verheijen (2018) interviewed migrant women to understand how they use cultural and social capital for their businesses, while Pio (2007) explored the experiences of Indian female entrepreneurs specifically. Examining female business ownership in New Zealand as well, Bourke et al. (2010) researched how women attempt to achieve a self-

employed work-life balance with responsibilities in elder care. These women reported that they felt they had at least some semblance of work-life balance, however, Bourke et al. found that this still came with considerable compromise. Thus, it is clear that the human experience of business ownership in New Zealand has been a source of interest and topic of focus for a variety of qualitative researchers.

2.8. Summary and Research Aim

Small businesses have come a long way in New Zealand to be recognised for their economic contributions to the nation. Their importance to the country signifies the value in understanding the formative lived experiences of small New Zealand business owners, which would have contributed to who they have become today. Researchers have engaged qualitative methodological approaches to analyse the lived experiences of small business owners across different circumstances. However, I have found limited research to date on the childhood experiences of small business owners, especially when considering communication theory and the New Zealand context. Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory can be employed to address this gap, as it demonstrates how individuals are socialised to the world through their family.

Traditionally, FCP theory has been used in quantitative research to draw associations between the different family communication patterns and different outcomes related to the topic in question. However, more recently various researchers (Sellnow-Richmond et al., 2015; Miller et al., 2021) have been adopting the tenets of FCP theory and evolving them to suit a qualitative approach. This means that FCP theory can move beyond the confines of asking *what* is an association, to start asking *why* and *how* is this experienced by individuals. Moreover, while a range of topics has been explored through FCP theory, I have found only one study by Soleimanof et al. (2021) that has touched upon business ownership and this is not within a New Zealand context. Further research into this area would be helpful for those who have public or private interests in small business and want to further understand the experiences of small business owners.

For my study, I set out to explore the family communication patterns that small New Zealand business owners experienced in their formative years during childhood and adolescence. I wanted to extend what other researchers have done in employing family communication theory while using qualitative analysis and ask *how* family communication was experienced and *how* it continued to influence business style and success. In this, I developed the following research question: **What are**

the lived experiences of small New Zealand business owners based on their recollections of the family communication patterns they experienced growing up?

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In this chapter I outline the methodology used to undergo this study, including the grounding in phenomenology, approach of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA), ethical considerations, and overall design of the research.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

All research has theoretical underpinnings (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Being conscious of this, every part of my research process has been grounded in phenomenology, which seeks to describe and understand phenomena as it is experienced by the individual undergoing the experience (Moran, 2000). That is, that the lived experience of an individual, while subjective, holds validity and meaning in and of itself. According to Moran (2000), the *actual* experience of the individual is of fundamental importance to a phenomenological approach, as opposed to a perceived or expected experience based on common sense, preconceptions, or other philosophical attitudes. Moreover, individuals are appraised as experts regarding their experience, so can freely express their thoughts on it without inhibition (Bann, 2009); they can speak authoritatively on what they know is true for themselves regarding the phenomena. Braun and Clarke (2021) argued phenomenology is loosely epistemologically situated within contextualism. Contextualism posits that meaning and knowledge are contingent on the contexts they come from (Braun & Clarke, 2021; DeRose, 1999). Moreover, Frey et al. (2000) positioned phenomenology in a naturalistic paradigm, which values context over universality, because of the notion that culture shapes everything within itself.

As a theoretical framework, phenomenology unequivocally aligns with qualitative research. Traditionally, researchers using FCP theory would use the Revised Family Communication Patterns (RFCP) Instrument, which is a questionnaire geared towards a quantitative methodology. However, reducing participant responses to Likert scales excludes the nuance of family communication from the narrative. It ignores *what it means* for a family to demonstrate elements of both high and low conversation and/or conformity orientation. As expounded in the previous chapter, family communication is complex and varied; it is negotiated and coloured by culture, generational hangovers, cumulative shared meaning, and individual idiosyncrasies. I intentionally grounded my research in phenomenology because it gives space for the deeper – and equally important – narrative to emerge. In this the research was permitted to step past the ‘how’ into the ‘why’. How I adapted the RFCP Instrument to intersect with and support a phenomeological study is explained below in Section 3.3.

3.2. Participants

3.2.1. Recruitment

Between January 2023 and March 2023 eight participants were recruited and interviewed. A purposive sampling method was used, leveraging off my pre-existing business networks. This ultimately became snowball sampling; the assistance of the Manawatū Chamber of Commerce would have been requested for further help in recruitment, however, snowball sampling proved effective enough by itself.

While eight small New Zealand business owners participated in this study, I use the word 'sample' with great caution. This is because Braun and Clarke (2021) argued that the term 'sample' connotes that the participants are representative of a larger population and the data they provide is reliably generalisable. This fails to recognize that meaning is contextual and situated; it does not align with the intentions of qualitative research. Instead, greater importance is placed on the richness and depth of the data, as well as the texture and nuance that can be captured from it.

3.2.2. Eligibility for Inclusion

To be considered for inclusion in this research an individual had to be:

- A current business owner who has less than 20 employees at the time of the interview.
- A New Zealand citizen who has spent the majority of their childhood and adolescence living in New Zealand.
- Eighteen years or older.

These requirements were detailed in the Information Sheet that each participant was provided before the interview (Appendix 1). Participants also declared that they were small business owners over the age of 18 when signing their consent form (Appendix 2).

3.2.3. Demographic Information

The eight participants in this study completed a basic demographic form (Appendix 3) before their interview commenced. Relevant demographic information is listed in Table 1 below. Also listed in Table 1 is the area/sector/field that the participant's small business is situated within, which was confirmed in the interview. While I did collect other information such as highest qualification

obtained, I decided that the area of business was more apt to disclose in the table below, based on how it does more to illuminate the findings.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information

Participant Pseudonym	Age Range	Ethnicity	Gender	Birth Country	Area of Business
Ryan	21 – 29	NZ European	Male	New Zealand	Trades
Marcus	40 – 49	Māori	Male	New Zealand	Contractor
Luna	21 – 29	NZ European, Samoan, Chinese, Other	Female	New Zealand	Marketing
Hayden	30 – 39	NZ European	Male	New Zealand	Property/ Real Estate
Daniel	21 – 29	NZ European	Male	New Zealand	Trades
John	50 – 59	NZ European	Male	New Zealand	Community Health
Nadia	21 – 29	NZ European	Female	New Zealand	Catering/ Events
Quinn	30 – 39	NZ European	Male	New Zealand	Advertising/ Design

3.3. Collection of Data

All eight interviews were semi-structured and ranged in duration from 38 minutes to 65 minutes. I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews because of how they probe into an individual's thoughts and allow for the exploration of the different ideas that are raised during the interview while keeping it focused (Adams, 2015; Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). To create the interview schedule, I adapted the Revised Family Communication Patterns (RFCP) instrument (as found in the Appendix in Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b); this guided my line of questioning (Appendix 4). The RFCP instrument is comprised of 15 questions to ascertain high or low conversation orientation and 11 questions to achieve the same for conformity orientation. These are close-ended questions that the participants rank on a Likert scale (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b). By transforming these questions to be open ended, I kept a framework that would be indicative of FCP theory concepts, while simultaneously allowing for depth and nuance. For example, a question in the RFCP instrument reads

"In our family we often talk about our feelings and emotions" (Koerner & Fitzpatrick, 2002b, p. 62) and traditionally participants would rank their agreement on a five or seven point scale. I adapted this in my interview schedule to read "How frequently, if ever, did you talk about your feelings and emotions as a family or within the family?". Depending on the answer, I would follow this up with prompts such as "Were there family members you were more comfortable with sharing your feelings and emotions with?" and "Did you feel you could be really transparent about your emotions or did you keep some repressed or hidden?".

Before launching into the exploratory questions adapted from the RFCP instrument, I asked my participants some introductory questions to gain some context around their business and life as a small business owner. These contextual questions also asked about their family structure growing up, to determine how they saw their family's dynamics at a macro level. While these questions provided important context, they were also important to ease the participants into the interview and build comfortability and rapport. A lot of the exploratory questions were asking about communication patterns that are innate and subconscious, requiring the participant to dig deep into their personal experience and assumptions. Thus, having contextual questions that were easy and intuitive to answer set a more relaxed tone for the interview, so that when the deeper questions came they had the implicit permission to take their time unpacking them.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

This research completely adhered to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants (2017). A Massey University Human Ethics Application was submitted to the Southern A Committee (now known as Ohu Matatika 1) and a low risk notification (4000026819) was provided on 21/10/2022 (Appendix 5).

My supervisor and I agreed that it would be best to submit a low risk ethics application; while communication patterns experienced in childhood are analysed in this study, the participants are all adults reflecting on their own previous experiences. No minors were solicited for participation and, conversely, participants had to declare that they were over 18.

3.4.1. Informed Consent

As all the interviews took place in person, each participant was provided with a physical copy of the Information Sheet (Appendix 1). The Information Sheet provided details about me as the researcher, the aim of the research, eligibility for inclusion, and the research process. It specified that

participants had the right to opt out of answering any questions both on the basic demographic information form and during the interview, and that a copy of the interview transcript would be provided for their review. Participants were welcomed to make any amendments to the transcript in the weeks following the interview if they desired to. While the transcripts already contained explicit redactions for confidentiality, I immediately implemented any further redactions that participants requested. The Information Sheet also specified that the interview recordings would be deleted and by when. This written information was also conveyed verbally before each interview.

Before each interview commenced the participant signed a consent form (Appendix 2) declaring that they:

- Had read the Information Sheet and understood why they were participating in the research.
- Had had the details of the research project explained to them and any questions about the research answered to their satisfaction.
- Understood that they could ask questions at any time and decline to answer any questions.
- Had been given enough time to consider participation in the research project.
- Acknowledged that their participation was voluntary.
- Understood that they would be provided with a transcript of their interview to which they could make amendments.
- Confirmed that they were over the age of 18.
- Confirmed that they were a current business owner with less than 20 employees at the time of signing.

3.4.2. Confidentiality

All data has been anonymised to ensure participant confidentiality. Pseudonyms have been used in place of the participants' real names and all identifying information was redacted from the transcripts. This included clearly marking redactions where names were used (including partners, siblings, relatives, and past employers), where names of businesses, workplaces or educational institutions were used, and where any other potentially identifying information was used. Affirming to the participants that all identifying information would be redacted during the transcription process gave them the freedom to speak without inhibition during the interview itself. All recordings of the interviews with this identifying information have been deleted.

3.4.3. Data Management

The audio recordings of the interviews were not shared or stored anywhere beyond the phone they were recorded on and have been deleted. I manually transcribed all the interviews and, apart from Microsoft Word, the only third-party programme that was engaged for this study was NVivo (a qualitative data analysis software). Anonymised transcripts with all the identifying information already redacted were exported into NVivo, of which my license is only accessible through my password protected computer or personal login. At the completion of this study all remaining data will be securely stored for five years, before being destroyed also.

3.5. Analysis

I selected Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) for data analysis in this study to meaningfully handle and explore the participants' experiences. As a branch of thematic analysis, the term 'reflexive thematic analysis' was birthed by Braun and Clarke (as cited in Byrne 2021) as an extension of their original 2006 publication on how they approach thematic analysis. They coined the term when addressing some of the ambiguity and subsequent scholarly misuse of their approach and have since refined the term in various other publications (Byrne, 2021). The notion of reflexivity captures how with RTA the researcher constantly analyses their own subjectivity and situatedness, recognising that they do not come to, or engage with, their data from a completely neutral standpoint (Braun & Clarke, 2021). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019), using RTA the researcher identifies and analyses themes in collated data, while acknowledging their part in creating meaning from it. The approach of RTA does not suppose that themes are pre-existing within the data, waiting for the researcher to discover them. Instead, through reflexive and recursive engagement, the researcher captures interpretive stories within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Considering this, Braun and Clarke (2021) describe research using RTA as an adventure and a journey; the endpoint is not to discover a universal truth, but to engage deeply, meaningfully and robustly with data to unpack and explore it's story.

3.5.1. Combined Inductive and Deductive Approach

While Braun and Clarke (2021) argued that RTA is never purely inductive because of the situatedness of the researcher, they also highlighted that an inductive approach to coding is possible with RTA if the interest is primarily understanding the experience of the individual. In this, the data is taken as the key starting place to derive meaning; the researcher engages with the data to capture the individual's story while exercising reflexivity to assess how they are contributing to its meaning. Conversely, a deductive approach looks at the data through the lens of the "theoretical or conceptual ideas the researcher seeks to understand" (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 56). Braun and Clarke (2021)

also clarified that a combination of inductive and deductive approaches is possible, provided the researcher has an awareness of how they are approaching and creating meaning from the data. Extending this, Byrne (2021) noted that a combination of inductive and deductive approaches is more common than not, as analysis seldom cleanly aligns with one or the other.

Working within a phenomenological framework strongly suits taking an inductive approach to data coding, because I am concerned with the lived experiences of individual small business owners. However, exploring these experiences through Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory suits a deductive approach, especially considering that RTA is never purely inductive. As permitted by Braun and Clarke (2021), I have taken a blended course of action by coding the data twice to use both inductive and deductive approaches. In the initial code I used a deductive approach, coding only to ascertain whether communication experiences aligned most strongly with high or low conformity orientation, or high or low conversation orientation. For the second code I used an inductive approach (explained more fully below in Section 3.5.3.2. *"Phase 2: Coding"*). It should be noted that the interest in FCP theory and subsequent combining of inductive and deductive approaches is a key reason why Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was selected over Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA goes much deeper into each data set, while RTA looks at themes across the data, the latter of which can sufficiently answer my research question by including FCP theory and still pertaining to a phenomenological framework.

3.5.2. Personal Situatedness

Given the importance of reflexivity in RTA, I examined myself before starting any analysis and reflected on this during the process. This included being critically aware of my own experiences and beliefs. I was exposed to small business ownership from an early age, as my parents bought a business when I was a child, ran it successfully for over a decade, and sold it in my late adolescence. In my formative years small business ownership was spoken about positively as a way to get ahead in life and make money. Now in adulthood, my husband has started his own small business and has been running it successfully for six years. Regarding family communication, I came from a stable two parent household, with parents who spoke positively over me and used an authoritarian style of parenting. While my family's communication patterns were high in both conversation and conformity orientation, there was a skew towards higher conformity. Thus, during analysis I brought an awareness that I was not meeting the data from a place of neutrality but examining it through the irremovable lens of my own positive personal experiences.

3.5.3. The Six Phase Approach

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) is a process with six distinct phases. The following titles for each phase were developed by Braun and Clarke (2021, p. 35), as well as the process behind them.

3.5.3.1. "Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with the dataset"

In this phase I was required to fully immerse myself in the data to become completely familiar with it. In their 2021 book entitled *Thematic analysis: A practical guide,* Braun and Clarke discuss the importance of reading the dataset multiple times to achieve this level of familiarity, which I did. However, in their 2006 article they also highlight the importance of the transcription process as not only a key way to become familiar with the dataset, but also as an essential interpretive act in itself. Under their recommendation, I manually transcribed all the interviews without the help of a transcription software such as Otter. All transcripts were verbatim, with grammatical decisions that aimed to capture the full nuance of the conversation. This first phase also required critical engagement, so I ensured that I was questioning and assessing the story within the data throughout this period of familiarisation.

3.5.3.2. "Phase 2: Coding"

Once familiar with the data, I began the coding process. Coding in RTA involves assigning labels to sections of data that pinpoint pockets of meaning related to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I did the initial deductive code on Microsoft Word, tagging lines and sections of data with comments containing my codes. As I was only looking to capture how the data aligned with FCP theory, the codes leaned more towards the semantic, staying close to the explicit meaning presented in the participants' dialogue (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Coding every interview in the dataset for a second time I took an inductive approach and used NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software, to assist with streamlining this process. In this code I was mindful of, but not constrained by, FCP theory and really delved into the latent meaning in the stories the participants were sharing. Braun and Clarke (2021) conveyed that latent codes encapsulate the deeper meaning that is implicit in the data but not necessarily expressly communicated. These codes aimed to capture the essence of the lived experiences being unpacked in the interviews.

3.5.3.3. "Phase 3: Generating initial themes"

The third phase of theme generation focused on looking at connections and patterns of meaning across the dataset, using the codes created in the second phase to guide the process. Braun and

Clarke (2021) made it clear that themes are not already hiding in the data, waiting to be unearthed and extracted. This is because phase three is not a passive process in which the researcher is merely discovering what already exists. Instead, the researcher is an active participant in the process of theme generation, crafting and shaping the raw data into a workable product. In this stage of the analytic process, I first went through the codes that were created on Microsoft Word to determine where the families of the participants would fit into the typology of family communication patterns (consensual, pluralistic, protective, or laissez-faire). This then informed how I approached the second stage of theme generation, wherein I clustered together the more latent leaning codes on NVivo that held similar concepts and meaning. Braun and Clarke (2021) also emphasised that themes are not simply topic summaries, so I ensured that while generating these initial themes I stayed focused on shared meanings across the dataset and not general topics covered.

3.5.3.4. "Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes"

Phase four is a heavily recursive process that involves revisiting all the initially developed themes to check their validity and further draw out their richness and nuance. Braun and Clarke (2021) are firm in their stance that this stage is not just a review of the themes, because the researcher is still actively engaging and developing them. In this phase of analysis, I checked that all the themes I had generated in phase three were both purposively addressing my research question *and* had maintained integrity to the story within the dataset. I discarded any themes that I felt had strayed too far from the data, did not work cohesively around a central topic, or did not have enough evidence to adequately flesh out later in phase six. Moreover, I merged any themes that I felt had too much overlap.

3.5.3.5. "Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes"

This penultimate phase of analysis involved laying the foundation for the final phase of writing everything up. As the title suggests, it involved refining the remaining themes by mapping their structure, writing brief theme definitions to ensure clarity and direction, and figuring out creative yet informative names for each theme (Braun & Clarke, 2021). While I found that this stage of analysis could have easily blended with the final writing up part, I honoured the analytic process of RTA to ensure a fully formed and comprehensive outcome.

3.5.3.6. "Phase 6: Writing up"

According to Braun and Clarke (2021), the final phase of writing up is still an essential part of analysis; it is not simply a write up of analysis that has already been completed, but instead analysis

is continued through writing about the data. Themes remain fluid in this process and can be continually refined and honed as the writing progresses. Analysis is not complete until the writing process itself is complete.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The eight participants interviewed in this study shared varied experiences of family communication growing up and how they believe that continues to impact them in their current business situations. From an initial deductive coding of the interviews, I measured where I believed the participants early family communication patterns fell against the conversation and conformity orientation dimensions of Family Communication Patterns theory. It is important to note that these findings are just my assessment of their statements, and thus only signal how their families could be typologically categorised by FCP theory; these initial findings are indicative instead of quantifiable and only intended to inform the rest of my analysis. After this I performed an inductive analysis of the data and generated six distinct themes: Independence from an Early Age, Religiosity and Associated Values, Nuanced Family Dynamics, Conforming to Authority, New Zealand: An Emotionally Guarded Culture, and Rejecting or Emulating Family Practices.

The following section details the findings of my deductive analysis. The chapter then introduces each theme from my inductive analysis with a brief overview. Later each theme is explored with extracts from the interviews that are direct quotations from the participants. The themes are discussed in-depth in Chapter 5.

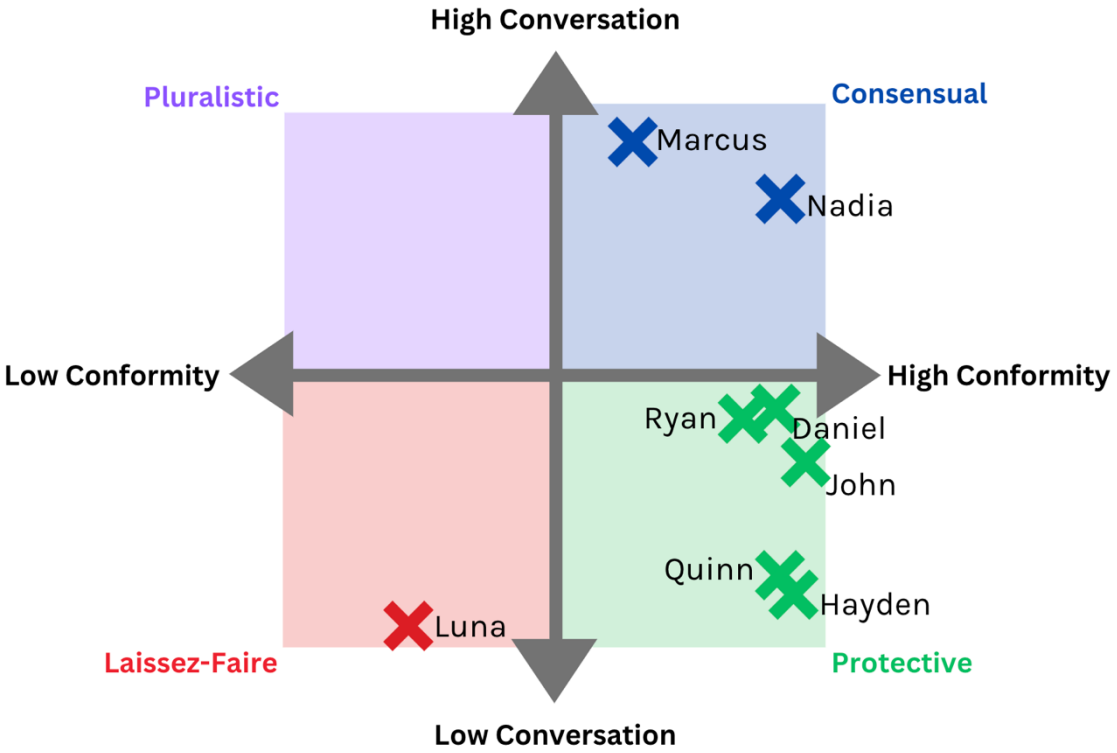
4.1. FCP Theory Typological Categorisations

As stated in Chapter 2, according to the typology proposed by McLeod and Chaffee (1972), families can be categorised as:

- **Consensual:** High conversation and high conformity orientations.
- **Pluralistic:** High conversation and low conformity orientations.
- **Protective:** Low conversation and high conformity orientations.
- **Laissez-Faire:** Low conversation and low conformity orientations.

According to the deductive analysis, in my assessment five of the participants fall within the Pluralistic category, two within the Consensual category, and one in the Laissez-Faire category, as depicted below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Typological Categorisation of Participants' Family Communication Patterns



To answer my research question it was important to understand the participants' stories through the lens of FCP theory. However, I reflected that the meaning I derived from this now affected my positioning and would inevitably layer over my findings in the deeper, inductive analysis (detailed in the next section).

4.2. Overview of the Themes

The six themes generated through my inductive analysis are not introduced in order of prevalence or importance. I would like to re-emphasise here that, to ensure confidentially, pseudonyms have been used in place of the participants' real names and redactions are made clear.

4.2.1. Independence from an Early Age

A strong sense of independence from an early age permeated the participants' recollections of their childhood experiences. This theme encompasses resilience, problem solving, financial responsibility, and a general reliance on self over others. At times, the participants' musings would not fit concisely into the confines of conversation *or* conformity orientation according to FCP theory, because the participants were not being shaped or influenced by family communication; they were carving their own course of action separate from the family unit.

4.2.2. Religiosity and Associated Values

A prevalent theme that cut across the participants' experiences was religiosity and its significant impact on family communication. Families would openly discuss their religious faith and the values attached to it. For many participants this was a positive and hugely significant part of their experience of youth, which they deem to be an important factor in why they are where they are.

4.2.3. Nuanced Family Dynamics

While participants often described a traditional upbringing at a surface level, this theme delves into the nuance within the family dynamics that was uncovered when participants pushed deeper into their story. This theme encapsulates how participants encountered disruption, dysfunction, external influences, and even abuse in their home life, and explores how this impacted their lived experiences and understanding of the world around them.

4.2.4. Conforming to Authority

When reflecting on their family's communication patterns, many participants – either overtly or covertly – identified elements of conformity orientation (see Figure 1). Some credited it with providing structure, security and direction in their life. Others believed that the expectation to conform was repressive and rebelled against it. Accordingly, this theme draws out the perceptions of living under expectations of authority, hierarchy, and adherence to family value systems.

4.2.5. New Zealand: An Emotionally Guarded Culture

As this research is grounded in a uniquely New Zealand context, this theme explores how the cultural setting has influenced how the participants' families communicated about feelings and emotions. It unpacks how participants often felt hesitation and guardedness when addressing their emotional state with their family growing up or avoided it altogether. Male participants especially identified that there was an expectation to "be brought up pretty tough" and consequently "work things out for ourself".

4.2.6. Rejecting or Emulating Family Practices

This final theme captures how lived experiences through childhood and adolescence have continued to impact implicit and explicit decisions as a small business owner today. In their stories participants identified how perceived negative communication experiences or observations of business failings have impacted their decisions as business owners. At a more implicit level, experiences of authoritarian parenting have guided interpersonal communication with staff.

4.3. Exploring the Themes

4.3.1. Independence from an Early Age

In various ways the participants indicated that they were propelled into independence from an early age. This was especially apparent through the sentiment that they would prefer to rely on themselves instead of going to parents or other influential family members for help growing up.

> Ryan: I usually just try and figure out stuff myself. Um, so if ever, you know, if ever anything was going wrong or I was upset or something I would normally just keep to myself and try [to] figure it out. …I feel like I could speak to them [my parents] about anything I needed. But I guess my personality was more just to always sort it out myself.

> Daniel: very like had to become quite like nah we'll do it ourselves and, yeah, no one's helped me get anywhere. Like God's been good to me obviously, but yeah no family help, no financial, like do it all yourself.

> John: And of course back then you- when you- if you wanted to call somebody you had to call their home phone. And there wasn't all this, you know, texting back and forwards or messaging. There just wasn't. So you sort of had to solve a lot of issues yourself. …problem solve, because you have to do it.

> Nadia: [Regarding solving issues] A lot of just myself I think. And then like as I got a bit older my sisters would come to me too and even now they come to me with like oh this has happened what do I do? And I'll be like oh this is what you should do. I think, yeah, from a young age I sort of dealt with things myself.

Some participants felt that this independence was pushed on them because of shortcomings and lack of trust within the family.

> Luna: because Mum left when she did I felt I literally could rely on no one. I literally – there was no one with – trusting with my emotions or my issues or anything. So yeah I absorbed a lot of things that I was going through and just kind of kept it to myself. It was just easier that way because then people don't let you down.

Hayden: I was, um, yeah, I felt like I had to figure [out] stuff… I made close friends, you know, and they became like my family. We'd sort out our problems together. Uh yeah, didn't feel comfortable enough at home to talk about all of my problems with my parents.

Leaving home at a young age as a catalyst to creating independence was impactful for some participants, acting as a watershed moment in their adolescence. For some this occurred on positive, amicable grounds and for others it was a negative, forced experience.

John: And I think, uh, also going away to [educational facility redacted] was good, because I had to learn how to do a whole lot of different things there, away from home. And then, um, and then moved to [city redacted], uh Mum and Dad had gone to Australia. And so once again I was doing it all by myself there as well. So I think, um, learning- being in an environment where you, ah, have to fend for yourself makes you a little bit more, ah, independent maybe or maybe gives you a different skill set.

Quinn: I moved out of home at 16. Even like it was a- it wasn't a dysfunctional house or anything like that it was just I had got to the point where I was… not happy there, um. And we lived out of town too. So that was a big thing. We lived not that far out of town but for me it was far enough out of town that it was over an hour bus ride into town and back for school and once I got to sort of that year 11 a lot of like sports trainings and things like that it meant that like days were really long and I couldn't go and see friends, uh… So that's probably that's the thing that had the strongest impact I guess on how I look at things is when I moved out of home, um.

Hayden: They [parents] kicked me out of home a couple of times. So probably the first time I was maybe, I don't know, 14 or 15. Had Dad chasing me down the road telling me not to come back. And that happened between then and when I was maybe 17 or 18 years old quite a few times. …I sort of looked after myself and go and stay with friends, yeah.

Daniel: Um, taken away from our parents at fourteen. …Uh, heaps of abuse, heaps of cops. …So lived with my- got put into CYFS care and lived with my aunty and uncle from 14 years old. Um, that was pretty hard. Moved from [city redacted] to [city redacted]. Lived there, finished my schooling out there and then yeah I don't know where we got our desire to want

to do better than what our parents had. I don't know where that comes from but probably not having a lot growing up, yeah.

The necessity to cultivate financial responsibility also came across strongly from the participants. This was seen to be an enabler of independence.

Daniel: So once we were 11 and started earning money on the paper run, yeah, started buying my own clothes and yeah. Like mum was like oh you can't have a cellphone until I get one, so I went and bought her a cellphone and then went and bought me a cellphone because I really wanted one. … my brothers and I are really close. We'd always be talking about different ideas and different things and – I think like the idea of wanting to make a buck was always like drilled into us from a young age. Like it didn't just come. Like everything we wanted we had to like work for it…

Quinn: because my leaving home was reasonably amicable, like Mum and Dad weren't stoked but they couldn't really do much to stop it, um, they supported me financially as well. So I- I think they were like it costs us 60 bucks a week to keep you, so we'll give you 60 bucks a week. It's going to cost you way more than 60 bucks a week to get a, like to board somewhere, so you're going to have to fill the shortfall. So quite quickly I had to get a job while I was at school, um, and think about money from that, like think about money properly from that age… Whereas I guess a lot of other kids that age don't need to think about money properly.

4.3.2. Religiosity and Associated Values

For many participants religious faith and the values associated with it were an integral part to the functioning of the family home. Religiosity dictated many interpersonal conversations and communication patterns.

John: So church was always a big thing for, uh, my brother and I growing up. Mum and Dad took us to church and we'd discuss it a bit afterwards… So- so certainly there were talks about what we'd [done] at Sunday School or something. And I was always grateful for that. That was a big part of life growing up.

Marcus: my parents, um, have always been in the church and they still are. Um, and they are quite strong there, well, quite active in their church. So at my dad's [church]… he's one of the

elders for [city redacted]. Um, they used to be in the [town redacted] one but they moved here about ten years ago. Mmmh. Yeah, so it was always- basically we were raised in a Christian household, I suppose you could say.

Quinn: we were brought up in a, um, reasonably, um, not strict, but a, uh, like a strong Christian house and so essentially anything outside of that was frowned upon. You know, so even things like watching the Simpsons was we would do it in secret. But it was not able to be done, um, openly, um, and- and anything kind of against or an opposing opinion to what was- what was considered sort of what we thought or how we thought wasn't, um, yeah wasn't really brought up.

For Luna, religion was present but not pervasive in the household.

Luna: we were raised Catholic, um, so like out of the wider [surname redacted] family my Dad's children were the ones who kind of like I guess went to church regularly because we lived with my grandparents so we went to church each Sunday. And we went to a Catholic high school as well, so there wasn't – I wouldn't say there was heaps of discussion about religion but it was an apparent part of our lives if that makes sense.

Daniel recalls that religious faith was introduced to him early on in life by his parents, but was not made to be important until he was placed into the care of extended family.

Daniel: That was always a conversation that we'd have at the dinner table [with extended family]. Yeah, that was quite common. Talking about Christian beliefs and faith and about what that looked like and stuff. So yeah, that was massive. Didn't really talk about it much growing up with mum and dad. Little bit. Mum would drag us along to church every now and then. But she was sort of like a part time Christian I would say. Like she'd just get wasted every night of the week and think like it was real good to go to church. Sort of every now and again we'd have that conversation, but more in [city redacted], so.

For Daniel, coming from an abusive early home life and being relocated by CYFS (Child, Youth and Family Services, now Oranga Tamariki), finding a religious faith had great significance in his adolescence. It changed the communication patterns he was surrounded by in the home from being closed off to high in conversation orientation.

> Daniel: But I became a Christian in August 2009, 1st of August 2009. I'll never forget it. I was like almost 15, yeah almost 15. And that changed my life a lot. Um, so yeah, talked a lot about feelings and stuff with Uncle [name redacted] and he was a real good role- role model to me. But yeah, definitely probably didn't talk about feelings as much with Mum and Dad. It was a pretty hard-nosed upbringing. We just didn't talk about that, so.

Comparatively, Marcus came from a community afflicted by drug additions, crime, and violence. He credited the Christian values of his parents to be what shielded him from that life and instead setting him on a positive, entrepreneurial path.

> Marcus: And so where I grew up in [town redacted], the street I grew up on, every single- not every single almost, I'd say 95% of the guys my age that I grew up with are either in jail now or have been to jail… The latest one… he went to jail about two years ago in [place redacted] for driving without a licence high on meth and alcohol and crashing into a car killing two kids. And so I always believe that it was my upbringing that stopped the same thing for me… So my sisters and I don't have any criminal convictions, anything. My parents, no. And I think it was my upbringing, mainly the church, you know, the influence of the church, you know, the values of the home. So my parents never drank.

It was not until later in life that Marcus could fully appreciate the gravity of his family communicating their religious values in his youth and the impact that has had on his journey.

> Marcus: [Regarding his upbringing] I think I ours was just highly influenced by my parents, you know, um, their church, which I didn't appreciate at the time until later… Especially when I keep running into people, I keep finding out what's happened to people… I think the stat that I found when I was at [occupation redacted] was that for every male born in 1977 for Māori, I think it was 60 something percent had a criminal conviction by the age of 38.

Nadia also reflected that she had come from a Christian home where Christian values were explicitly discussed. Now, even though her small business takes up so much of her time, faith and honouring her Christian values is more important.

> Nadia: I want to achieve things and I want to run a business because it makes me feel good, but actually like at the end of the day like my beliefs, um, sort of make me feel like actually what is the bigger picture here? Like I actually need more time to fellowship with other people and, you know, like where am I doing the Lord's work? And I sort of feel sometimes like actually I need to get myself in a position where I can step back so I am going to church every Sunday because that's really important to me.

4.3.3. Nuanced Family Dynamics

As the participants delved further into their experiences of childhood and adolescence an apparent theme was that their family dynamics held nuance that strayed from the insular, nuclear ideal of a family unit and disrupted communication. For Ryan, this was caused by the constant presence of international boarders in the home from the age of six or seven until a few years before he moved out. The boarders caused an environment of pretense and sterility, stunting open family communication.

> Ryan: Um, just trying to think back at all the times we sat around the dinner table and to be honest they were fair- pretty far between occasions. Um, cause growing up we always had borders at our house so, um, it [conversation] wasn't always directed at necessarily our family but more just talking to the borders and stuff… it wasn't just about our family and talking about how everyone was doing etcetera etcetera. It was, you know, it was a bit more sterile and like the questions were probably a bit more broad and not as personal.

Ryan felt that he had to figure business out more on his own accord, because having boarders limited how much business could be talked about within the home.

> Ryan: Um, and probably going on to what you said before did you ever talk about business or anything like that maybe that was a reason we didn't talk about business because we always had foreigners or I guess strangers in our house.

Luna found that having her parents separate in her early years and subsequently feeling abandoned by her mother greatly impacted the family's dynamic.

> Luna: my parents were together until I was about six or seven years old, I think. They never got married but they were just like in a de facto relationship and they separated in 2004, I

> believe. And that was quite a- a- what's the word? Life changing, that's a weird word, but it was quite an integral part of my childhood growing up. Like I remember that happening, like mum leaving our house and stuff.

Because Luna's mother left she felt that the burden was on her to act as a mother figure to her siblings when she was only a child herself. At the same time her father became immersed in work, forcing her to create a façade of stability for her siblings when she felt that there was not any.

> Luna: But from what I remember when my mum left I kind of like had to step up. So what was I? No, maybe I was a little bit older, maybe I was like 10 when mum left. And so at that time I kind of had to step up and be like more of like a mum.

Luna's father was also relatively absent, putting his attention and energy into work. Luna recalled feeling that she was raised by her grandparents, while raising her siblings.

> Luna: after mum and dad separated my dad kind of just buried himself into word and we ended up living like week on week off between Mum and Dad and when I was about year nine so what's that, like 13, we started living with my grandparents full time with Dad though. So it was like we lived at Nana's and Papa's but Dad was there too. So we'd do week on between Nana's and Mum's. And again Nana and Papa, um, provided, still like they provided only like the survival- stuff we needed to survive.

Another participant who credits a grandparent with partially raising and sculpting his character in his formative years is Marcus.

> Marcus: they [parents] decided to build a- like a granny flat I suppose on the side of our house. So when I was about, I don't know, I was still at primary school, they got that. My grandfather decided to move into there… But he more often with the discussions about religions and politics and stuff, it was more him… he had retired and so when I was at home my parents were at work, so he was like, maybe I don't know, looking after us and stuff. And so the conversations about those things were more with him, because he was always there.

Daniel was also raised by extended family from the age of 14. Before being placed by CYFS (now Oranga Tamariki) into his aunt and uncle's home, he recalls there being disruption between living with his mother and father.

> Daniel: Lived with mum and dad, yip, until we were fourteen, yeah. So and very like on and off, like dad would be there and then mum, yeah.

During this period Daniel and his siblings were subjected to violent and abusive family dynamics. When reflecting on this time, Daniel noted that nobody will ever really be able to understand such extreme family dynamics if they have come from a safe home.

> Daniel: Lot of people try and understand it and like even [wife's name redacted] and I have talked about it. [Wife's name redacted] will never understand. And I don't ever expect her to, you know, that's not her and that's not her upbringing. She's got such a nice, lovely, loving family and I come from such a screwed up, dysfunctional, violent, abusive family. And it's just like it's okay. People aren't going to ever empathise with that if they haven't come from that. So that's okay. But that's flipping, that's been hard, like, yeah. Lot of hurt and stuff like that, so hmm. But we get through it by the grace of God.

Being placed into a safe household with healthy family communication in his adolescence has caused Daniel to feel deep gratitude to his uncle and aunt.

> Daniel: I grew to like find a lot of love for them [uncle and aunt] because of what they had like saved us from and helped us with. Yeah, it was pretty ugly growing up so very grateful to them for taking us out of that.

Hayden felt that his family dynamic was greatly altered by having an absent father, who was more dedicated to his work than the family. It was his mother who balanced this.

> Hayden: Dad worked two jobs… Um, I always saw Dad working really hard. So I think that is still in me today… Um, Dad was quite absent. Mum was very- very, yeah, nurturing.

This absence contributed to the strain Hayden felt in his relationships with his father. It was not until adulthood that any sort of open, amicable communication with him would form.

> Hayden: Dad, like, he was sort of a brick wall, yeah. Like couldn't really go to him about much, yeah. But I could- I could talk to my Mum about things, yeah. She was quite open. … probably didn't have a long conversation with my father until I was in my mid-twenties.

For Nadia, having seven siblings greatly impacted the family dynamic and her communication with her parents. Coming from such a big family meant that she had limited time with her parents individually.

> Nadia: [Regarding having long conversations with parents] Not as a kid. As a kid Mum and Dad were busy and we played… Mum and Dad didn't play with us ever really. They were too busy. Mum was doing all the housework, cooking, cleaning and Dad worked a lot.

Quinn's family dynamic altered when he moved out at 16. Moving out of home at an early age meant that the influence of Quinn's parents lessened and the new family he was living with permitted freedoms he otherwise would not have had.

> Quinn: I boarded with- boarded with they were family friends. Not like really, really good family friends, but family friends. … And I was also reasonably autonomous by that point and so there wasn't- they didn't need to do any parenting, or not much parenting… if I was a massive rebel then that would have been negative on me because I- because I was taking responsibility for myself I could of gone off the rails pretty quickly and pretty easily. But I never really was interested in, you know [rebellious activities]… they didn't really have a reason to need to try and parent me either.

4.3.4. Conforming to Authority

When participants unpacked their families' communication patterns, many appeared to fall on the upper end of the conformity orientation dimension. This was evident through narratives of structured family hierarchy and parental expectations of adherence to their authority. For some participants this was a positive aspect of their childhood and adolescence; they felt security in conforming to the family system.

> John: It was sort of- well it was always you were open to discuss things but it was just like, well, it didn't matter what you believed. It was just this is what we do. And that was okay. There's a safety in that, I think. There's a surety in that. Um, everybody knows where they stand, you know. … just because you're the authority figure I think, um, in today's society

> that would be seen as almost tyrannical, but it wasn't. It was this is, you know, our house, our castle, these are the family rules, this is what is expected in the family, this what the family does. The family sticks together and keeps together and then one day when you have your own family you can make the rules for yourself.
>
> Ryan: when you're young you kind of think, you know, that you know everything but when you're older you realise that you didn't really know much and that your parents and people that are older than you tell you stuff based on their past experiences… I definitely did respect their authority but now I appreciate more why you should… I think every parent would want to feel like they are the authority figure.

It is interesting to note here that against the framework of FCP theory, Ryan and John both come from protective families. This is because, within their narratives, they identified more communication experiences that would place their families higher in the conformity orientation dimension and lower in conversation orientation. For both Ryan and John, coming from protective families made them feel exactly that – protected. Nadia also came from a protective family and conveyed that in childhood she developed a special bond with her father, despite him being a strong, dominant authority figure.

> Nadia: I think like in my family everybody has their say but it was always like Dad's in charge. So Dad always has the final say. So if you're on the other side, well, tough luck it was always Dad was in charge. The boss, yeah. … we'd all debate and then at the end of the day he'd sort of say this is actually how it is. … He was awesome but he was like a man's man and this is my house, my rules, if you live here you do what I say. If you don't want to do what I say go live somewhere else type thing.

A participant with a positive view of authority coming from a consensual family (high in both conversation and conformity orientations) is Marcus. His grandfather was an authority figure in the household, but also outside of the household. Respecting the mana and authority of his grandfather was not only honouring an internal family structure but was also appropriate in the wider cultural setting. However, this did not result in cold and distanced family hierarchy; he was still "just… Grandfather".

> Marcus: you know, you've got respect [for my grandfather] and it wasn't until later I realised the, um, respect people had when they would talk about him from the wider- wider Iwi and

> marae and stuff. And then you start remembering, oh yeah, people always used to come around home to pick him up, you know, and so on. But to us it was just, oh that's Grandfather.

Other participants recalled the expectation to obey their parents' authority and submit to the rules of the household as a negative experience. Hayden, Quinn and Daniel all came from protective families but, to varying extents, viewed conforming to parental authority as an unreasonable burden instead of as an a natural instinct. Hayden felt that his parents were excessive in their demands for obedience and, in turn, he rebelled.

> Hayden: It was very much a respect your elders, uh, childhood, adolescence. We weren't really allowed to voice our opinions. … when I was maybe ten years old I screamed f*ck you at [parent redacted] and jumped out a window and ran away through a paddock. And [parent redacted] screamed at me and chased me as far as she could, uh, before giving up and I didn't come back to the house [until] evening that day.

Now as an adult, however, Hayden sympathises more with his parents' position. He acknowledges that they also grew up under strict authoritarian parents and were doing their best with what they knew.

> Hayden: I know that my parents both had strict upbringings, uh, by parents that were from a different era, you know. By parents that had been through a big depression, um – um, I think that they were just doing what they knew best. I think perhaps they had both made a lot of mistakes in their lives and they didn't want to see me repeating those mistakes. They just wanted what was best for me and they loved me a lot.

Quinn felt that his parents' expectation of him to conform to their rules and authority without question was a motivating factor for his moving out of home.

> Quinn: that was where some of the issue went to because I started to not obey them without question. So generally I would obey them, but often the question would be like, you know, why is it that I have to do this or whatever, and that didn't usually get a very good response.

In an environment besmirched by abuse, Daniel recalled that his parents, particularly his father, demanded an unhealthy level of obedience.

> Daniel: it was very much mum or dad's way or the highway. … It was I'm the mother or I'm the father, you listen to me. So rule with an iron fist. … my father would just demand respect because I'm your father. Why? Because I'm your father.

Daniel recalled experiences of parental manipulation to gain acquiescence.

> Daniel: Dad would lock the house door and he'd be like mow those lawns and he'd lock it and he'd be like there's a glass of water waiting here for you when you're done. Like that was just like hard no's, like you live under my roof that's what you do. Like there's no like five bucks for mowing the lawns it was just like there's a glass of water there for you if you want it.

When it came to respecting authority there was a sense of dissonance when Daniel went to live with his uncle and aunt. There was an expectation of respect, but due to their age and upbringing to date, Daniel and his siblings did not find this came naturally.

> Daniel: There was a lot of different. It was hard because they weren't my parents, but we still had to respect them. … it was a very different, because we were 14 and probably had our own ideas of what we thought was good and yeah, would they expect us to obey them? Yeah, in certain things if we were living under their roof there would be certain things that we did or didn't do.

It was an unspoken rule in Luna's home that she was to respect the authority of her grandparents. However, coming from a laissez-faire family (low in both conversation and conformity orientation), her father did not demand obedience and she felt she did not owe respect to her mother for how she had left her as a child.

> Luna: So we- when they [grandparents] asked us to do something we did it. You can't really say no to them and you kind of just do as you say. Um, I guess Dad would have been the same as well if he was round to ask those questions or like those orders. Um, I never really saw Mum on that level because I kind of always was like you left us I don't owe you anything and I don't have to listen to you kind of thing. When we did like the week on week off

> between Nana's and Mum's I would find myself quite upset with my Mum like I would have this like- it was almost a subconscious resentment that I had towards her for leaving and stuff so I never really took for what she said or if she told me to do something I would have no problem not listening to her. Yeah, or talking back or something.

When Luna turned 18 she was allowed to make her own life decisions without submitting to the authority of her grandparents, but this was implicit and never openly agreed within the family.

> Luna: because we were Catholic, my boyfriend in high school, we were never allowed to share the same bed. He would have to sleep on like a blow-up mattress in the lounge. I didn't even think about asking to go and stay at his house until I turned 18. Once I did, I don't know, it was just this weird unspoken thing that I was allowed to. Um, up until 18 years of age even though I was at university and stuff and I'd left school, I'd still ask my dad or my grandparents if I could go do something up until age 18. But once it went to 18 I just let them know. I informed them.

4.3.5. New Zealand: An Emotionally Guarded Culture

Regardless of whether participants felt comfortable discussing general topics with their family, most male participants conveyed a discomfort with discussing feelings and emotions growing up. They connected this to the cultural stigma around males expressing emotions in New Zealand.

> Ryan: I feel like it's – probably some guys are different – but I feel like it's pretty common for males to not really talk too much about their emotions… males in a New Zealand context.

Ryan also communicated that it did not matter what family member it was, discussing feelings and emotions would be "probably just awkward regardless". John's story also supports this narrative, as he reflects that there was an expectation to emulate how tough his father was.

> John: [Brother's name redacted] still doesn't [talk about his feelings]. Yeah no, maybe it is a cultural thing. I think it was also expected that Dad, because he had been brought up pretty tough, that he would also, um, that we also were brought up, you know, I suppose to work out life a bit for ourself… Was I worried about feelings being hurt and stuff? No, because you know, I had my brother and we could chat to each other, but we just sort of get on with it, you know.

Due to a lack of comfortability discussing emotions in the family, Hayden turned to illicit substances for mental relief.

> Hayden: I think, um, I think that's why I started smoking weed when I was maybe, um 16 or 17. It was sort of like an escape from that repression [of emotion].

When his relationship with his parents was strained, Hayden also did not feel he could turn to his brothers to discuss his needs, emotions and general mental health.

> Hayden: I was the big brother, you know, so I was meant to be knowing what I was doing. They were, well, I felt like they were anyway looking up to me as the, I don't know, as the person knowing what they were doing. So it was probably too damaging a thought for my fragile eg- ego at the time to think about going to my younger brothers for help.

As he came into his adolescent years, Quinn felt hesitant to discuss any topic related to his feelings with his parents because they were unlikely to validate the way he was feeling.

> Quinn: I got a little bit older and realised that if it wasn't something that was, um, something that Mum would agree with especially then she would either switch off or the response would be not positive and so I'd just probably stop bothering at some point.

Daniel conveyed that, due to the intensity of the painfulness that came with being uplifted by CYFS, he and his brothers had no choice to but to physically give an outlet to their emotions despite being expected to toughen up.

> Daniel: Cried a lot in our teenage years. Flip, it was hard… Flipping hard. Get your family ripped apart and then just try and be like you'll be right boys, you're tough… Yeah, it was hard. Lots of tears.

Even Luna, who is a female, identified that the cultural repression of male emotion affected her family communication.

> Luna: on my Dad's side discussion of like feelings or just making sure if someone's like okay or if they're not having a great day, like mental health wasn't and still isn't really a thing for Pacific Island families. It's like when you break a bone- when you break a bone or something, when your leg's bleeding they can see that injury but mental health because it can't be seen it's not really considered like a sickness, like an illness or something.

Luna conveyed that her mother had a greater proclivity to be nurturing, but because of her mother's own mental health issues and instable presence in the home, Luna felt that she could not fully communicate her feelings to her either.

> Luna: my mum she has lots of mental health issues and that is very prevalent in her life in her side of the family. So she was a bit better in being softer and understanding our emotional needs but because she like came and went it like wasn't like stable support.

With eight children, in Nadia's family feelings and emotions were not discussed because the seven other siblings would tease and make fun of these types of admissions.

> Nadia: Um, I don't know that we did [talk about feelings and emotions] a lot, but I don't know if it was- no, probably not. Like we would tease each other. If somebody got upset about something they'd just get ripped into.

When asked if feelings and emotions were ever discussed Nadia responded "Not emotions and like, like topics. But like not like oh that's made me feel hurt. They'd be like well, you know, rip into each other".

Marcus was the only participant who expressed a level of comfortability talking about feelings and emotions at home.

> Marcus: Yeah I think if you had like a problem you were just- spit it out even if it was something bad- you might've done something bad, I don't know, you wouldn't have any shame to, you know, air it.

4.3.6. Rejecting or Emulating Family Practices

A theme that was evident in looking across the participants' stories was that the experiences of family communication in their youth has influenced how they navigate small business ownership today. For Hayden, having a negative experience with the expectation to conform to parental authority in his youth set a precedent for how he did *not* want to conduct business.

> Hayden: Um, nearly, like, nearly every day I think about using examples of my youth as like an antonym for how I want to run business. Yeah. So my business is called [business name redacted], you know, and our motto is [redacted]. It's all about, um, it's all about freedom, it's all about liberation, it's all about radical transparency, it's all about kindness, it's about love. And perhaps I'm using business as a remedy for the oppression I felt as a youngster.

Acting as an "antonym to the way I was raised" for Hayden meant that he now operates a flat structured business to foster equality, rather than forced authority, with his staff.

> Hayden: I definitely do demand a certain level of respect but probably more so the regular respect that you'd expect from any interpersonal relationship. I run the business very horizontally and prefer to see my team members as peers rather than subordinates.

Similarly, Quinn also operates a horizontal business to subvert the authoritarian family structure and communication style he had grown up under with his parents.

> Quinn: I think I'm probably more the opposite [of an authority figure], you'd have to talk to my staff about that, but that- that I don't often pull rank. It's actually very uncommon for me to pull rank, uh, I much- I'd much rather have all of the whatever, you know, whatever the decision is and have all the facts in front of me and have whoever it is, like, whether it's a staff member or a contractor or whoever, be able to give me a- a- an educated opinion on whatever it is we need to do or whatever decision we need to make and then that way, as opposed to thinking that the way that I think it has to be done is the only way it can be done.

As another example, Daniel also intentionally deals with people in business with a softer approach than what was demonstrated to him in his youth. The overt pressure to conform to authority has pushed him to operate in a completely opposite way. When asked if he expected people to respect his authority he responded:

> Probably not to be honest. I just sort of go oh nah like that's fine. Like don't take the mickey, but within reason. Yeah I'm probably Mr Nice Guy and Mr Nice Guy always comes last but I'd rather be Mr Nice Guy than be a knob end, so… I definitely don't think I rule with an iron fist. Like I'd rather let it be, you know, and probably not say something when I probably should say something.

Luna believed that the family communication patterns she experienced growing up had instilled a strong work ethic in her. However, she would make a concerted effort to operate the financial side of her business in a fundamentally different way than what she had seen executed in the family business growing up.

> Luna: my work ethic and kind of how hard I go at my work and at my business is similar in that respect… I'm a hard worker but like everything else is different… I have more education and knowledge around the importance of having like different like insurances in the business and I understand more about finances and how to create a more financially successful company because like a lot of their business is built on my grandfather taking out like business loans… and then like paying them back super quick. So like huge financial pressure on the cash flow to like pay it back real quick rather than like saving up enough money and then just buying the thing outright. It's really strange. But yeah it puts a lot of pressure on the financials, um, of the business. So I guess that's something I've learned and something I would choose not to do.

Another person who did not want to repeat the mistakes of their family was John. Witnessing his father's failed business ventures as a child is what motivated John to ultimately succeed in his own business venture as an adult.

> John: Dad tried a few small businesses and it didn't work out over a number of occasions, uh, for various reasons and, um, so I tried to- to make sure that I didn't- didn't… do those same things. Not to, um, to- to sort of cock things up really. I sort of got business advice from other people. Not that I got a lot of business advice, but I wanted to make sure that I didn't fail… I can honestly say that I was more scared of failure than success. So the fear of failure drove my success and it drove me hard. Failing was not an option for me and it drove me harder. It

> wasn't even the success that was pleasing, it was actually the success of not failing. So whereas my Dad had failed and I didn't want to go down that path with my family.

Conversely, some participants tried to emulate the family communication patterns of their youth in their business management. Nadia reflected that the way her family operated, in that everyone would have their say but her father would have the final word, was how she also operated as a boss with her staff.

> Nadia: Yeah and I feel like that is sort of how I operate in business. But like we, yeah, there's not a lot of times when that is needed [to have the last word]. But I guess when it is I do like say no this is what we're going to do, so I need everybody to get on board with that.

For Nadia, having a strong sense of independence and a reliance on herself before others has also been beneficial and as she has ventured into owning her own small business.

> Nadia: I think that [relying on myself] has helped me. And even like not in terms of just staff, but general issues, like you know, something's not ready when it's meant to be, like I do jump in and sort it out straight away and fix it. It probably, um, like doesn't allow people to use their initiative as much, because I'm too quick to just jump in and fix it my way, rather than like encouraging other people to.

Ryan believed that respecting the authority of his parents growing up was positive in his development. Consequently, how he communicates with his staff reflects these same communication patterns.

> Ryan: Yeah probably [expect staff to obey final decisions], yeah. Um, probably just want them to do something and don't explain why… if they don't respect my authority I'd rather not have them work for me.

4.4. Summary

In this chapter I unpacked the findings from a combined deductive and inductive analytical approach. Figure 1 depicts how, based on my personal interpretation, most participants identified high conformity orientation in their family communication patterns growing up, and a large segment fell within the Protective cateogory. A deeper dive into the data generated six distinct themes, which

were described here beside the participants' stories in their own words. An in-depth discussion of these findings is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 – Discussion

In the previous chapter the findings of this study were presented to explore the research question *What are the lived experiences of small New Zealand business owners based on their recollections of the family communication patterns they experienced growing up?* This chapter further continues that exploration through weighing the findings against the current literature and breaking down their meanings and implications. The research's limitations, as well as future recommendations for it, are also discussed in this chapter.

I would like to briefly acknowledge here the interchangeability between the terms 'business owner' and 'entrepreneur' in this discussion. When assessing how scholars have defined these terms there is significant overlap to the point of negligible difference. I adopt the different terms during this discussion depending on what terminology the researcher in question has used.

5.1. Significance of Findings and Current Literature

5.1.1. Independence

When first coding the findings it became quickly apparent that a strong thread of the theme of independence was being pulled through all the participants' stories. This was because the framework of Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory is only constructed to assess conversation orientation and conformity orientation; the theme of independence stuck out because it did not fit tidily into either of these dimensions. This was evident when participants said, for example:

> If ever anything was going wrong or I was upset or something I would normally just keep to myself and try figure it out. …I feel like I could speak to them [my parents] about anything I needed. But I guess my personality was more just to always sort it out myself.

Koerner and Fitzpatrick (2006) argued families who fall into the lower end of the conformity orientation dimension promote the independence of their family members. However, my findings indicate that this is an oversimplification of how families communicate, because many of this study's participants exhibited indications of high conformity orientation *and* indisputable independence. Koerner and Fitzpatrick's definition of conformity did not factor in the personal autonomy that children and adolescents have; parental permission does not always have to come before independence is exemplified. What is emphasised in the findings is that while participants could have conformed to the decisions of their family and/or could have initiated discussion with their family,

they actively *chose* to act independently of the family unit. Thus, FCP theory does not adequately account for how family members can be actively engaged in the family unit while acting independently of it.

The findings demonstrated that a propensity for independence denotes intrapersonal conversation that involves problem solving and high levels of resilience. The lived experience for many of the participants growing up exemplified independence in how they would figure issues out themselves and rely on themselves to meet their own needs. De Vries and Shields (2006) stated that the need for SME (Small and Medium Sized Entreprise) owners to possess resilience is so much more pertinent in a New Zealand context, because of how the country is geographically isolated and economically open; business owners often have less resource to work with in a highly competitive market. Moreover, De Vries and Shields discussed that part of how SME owners in New Zealand demonstrate resiliency is through their self-efficacy and desire for autonomy. This is also supported by Branicki et al. (2017), who identified the "need for autonomy" (p. 1251) as a prevalent attribute of resilient entrepreneurs. Branicki et al. argued that resilient entrepreneurs create resilient, successful businesses. This helps to make sense of why it naturally became evident that independence was an integral part of the lived experience of small business owners, despite the interview schedule not directly probing to discover this. For these small business owners, independence as demonstrated through problem-solving, resiliency, and a desire for autonomy has not been a learned experience in adulthood but has been a lived experience since childhood. This has, at least in part, dictated how they communicated with their families.

5.1.2. Religiosity

In the interview schedule religion was only touched upon to ask if there was any taboo in communicating about it. However, when the small business owners spoke of the values that underscored their families' communication growing up, they could not separate this from the influences of religion. In turn, it was evident that these values still drive their decisions in business and general life today. Hoogendoorn et al. (2016) stated that there is a positive correlation between the Christian religion and business ownership. According to them, religion has a macro-effect on the wider economic and entrepreneurial activity of a community. Extending this, Deller et al. (2018) explained that there is immense social capture in adhering to a religious faith and attending regular worship services. The key components of social capital, "networks, norms and trust" (Deller et al., 2018, p. 366), are readily built through attending the same worship services and participating in the same voluntary religious commitments. Moreover, subscribing to the same faith system inherently

builds trust between individuals, which is positive for entrepreneurial activity. Thus, it is possible that the small business owners felt more confident to explore an entrepreneurial path knowing they had the backing of their faith networks and social capital to leverage in their communities. Participation in a faith community can be partially attributable to the family communication patterns they experienced growing up; communication was often heavily oriented towards conversing about, and conforming to, a positive outlook on Christian-based faith.

There is a significant correlation between religious faith and resilience (Foy et al., 2011). According to Foy et al. (2011), different religious practices are seen to help an individual cope in adverse circumstances. These can include seeking help from other members of a faith community and seeking comfort from God, among other activities. Resilience as a manifestation of independence was discussed in the last section. Thus, while the themes of independence and religiosity were distinct in the findings, it is likely that there is an interplay between these lived experiences in the individual's lives. It could be inferred that religion has helped to establish and maintain the resilience that has benefited the entrepreneurial undertakings of the participants.

In exploring family communication patterns and how they influence religious beliefs, Fife et al. (2014) found that both high conformity orientation and high conversation orientation are positive indicators of religious belief continuing into adulthood. They noted that the traditionally structured families that are more strongly aligned with conformity orientation produce strong religiosity. However, the open dynamics of conversation orientation also provide space to comfortably explore religious beliefs. The findings of my research are not intended to predict the same causality, as they are phenomenologically concerned with the lived experiences of individuals. That said, there are echoes of Fife et al.'s findings in the participants' stories. For example, John and Nadia's lived experiences emphasised communication patterns where conformity was comfortable, and both individuals have gone on to acknowledge the importance of their childhood faith in their adult lives. Moreover, while Daniel's parents attended church when he was a child, religious faith did not have a resonance in his life until he moved in with his uncle and aunt where safe, exploratory conversation about faith began to take place in settings such as over the dinner table. Finally, Luna's family communication patterns aligned with a laissez-faire typology, where neither conversation nor conformity orientations were high. Her story was coloured by some distance to the Catholic faith she grew up around.

5.1.3. Adversity

For some participants, atypical family dynamics were only influenced by boarders and big families – there was no insurmountable hardship. However, for other participants atypical, nuanced family dynamics were caused by parents who were separated and absent, feelings of maternal abandonment, forcibly being removed from (or told to leave) the family home, and outright abuse. Despite these experiences of adversity in their formative years, the participants were able to establish and maintain businesses in adulthood. Research indicates that this is not a rare occurrence, as there is a significant connection between childhood adversity and entrepreneurship (Yu et al., 2022; Maharaj, 2022; Yu et al., 2023). Yu et al. (2022) argued that while childhood adversity can lead to negative life outcomes such as unemployment, moderate experiences of adversity in early life allow for the development of resilience. Their study found that experiences of childhood adversity can create the resilience needed to succeed as an entrepreneur, as well as attributes such as creative problem solving, quick thinking, ability to navigate ambiguity, improvisation, and tolerance of stress. Supporting this, Yu et al. (2023) found that childhood adversities could be "mixed blessings" (p.2); early adversity could promote an entrepreneurial inclination to break the rules and challenge authority but could also detract from education and self-efficacy. This indicates that while adversity can build strong entrepreneurial characteristics, it is not guaranteed but situational. Thus, the participants in this study are representative of the individuals who have endured adversity in their youth and have consequently built resilience, which in turn has created positive rather than negative life outcomes.

5.1.4. Cold and Warm Conformity

Many of the participants in this study had families with communication patterns that indicated a high conformity orientation according to FCP theory. However, participants' perceptions varied as to whether this manifested in positive or negative ways during their youth. Up until 2017 the literature depicted conformity orientation to be largely negative, affirming the experiences of those participants who felt repressed and misunderstood. However, Hesse et al. (2017) recognised that this depiction of conformity did not encompass the positive experiences of homogeneity in attitudes and beliefs within the home. They argued that while conformity orientation can include overbearing authority and limited freedom of thought, it can also include collectively valuing the family system and promoting harmony, inclusivity, and healthy attachment. The former negative appraisal of conformity orientation they labelled 'cold conformity', while the latter they labeled 'warm conformity'. Other scholars have identified the value in this extension of FCP theory and have used

cold and warm conformity in their own research. For example, McNallie and Gettings (2023) used both cold and warm conformity orientations when investigating technologically mediated communication between grandparents and their grandchildren. Moreover, in their investigation of patients' perceptions of their involvement in their medical care, Rauscher et al. (2020a) found that warm conformity was the most reliable predicator of patient perceptions; this demonstrates the benefit in differentiating between the cold and warm elements within conformity orientation.

The necessary addition of cold and warm conformity to FCP theory suggests that family communication is nuanced, non-linear, and not easily confined to strict definitions. As such, it aligns with my findings that depicted variances and idiosyncrasies within the participants' narratives. Some of the participants, such as John and Ryan, have accounts of family communication that depict warm conformity. For them, conforming to the views and expectations of their parents was an innate behaviour that came effortlessly. Through conformity they found comfort and assurance, as the internal, implicit cohesion of the family system acted as both a guide and safety net:

"…it didn't matter what you believed. It was just this is what we do. And that was okay. There's a safety in that, I think. There's a surety in that." – John

Conversely, participants such as Hayden and Quinn voiced experiences of family communication that clearly aligned with cold conformity. For them, conformity was a forced, sometimes reprehensible expectation that caused disharmony and dissatisfaction in their home life, especially in adolescence:

"…that was where some of the issue went to because I started to not obey them without question." – Quinn

Overall, this demonstrates that while conformity orientation was an integral feature of the early lived experiences of these small business owners, how it was enacted and perceived came down to personal situational factors.

5.1.5. Uncomfortable with Emotion

A person's family is typically viewed as the 'safe' people who can take the bad with the good in life and be accepting no matter what. However, reflecting on their lived experience of youth the participants clearly expressed an uncomfortableness in voicing their feelings and emotions with their parents and other family members. The sentiment strongly came through that men were expected to

be tough and sort everything out for themselves, indicating that expressing emotion signified weakness. The idea that this could be a part of New Zealand culture is supported in the literature. Bannister (2005) posited that as a settler nation, the ideal of the kiwi bloke grew out of the need for pragmatic physical toughness against the elements and rough terrain, as the pakeha male pioneered himself into a hegemonic position. Thus came the idealisation of a man of toughness and strength who would keep his emotions from others; in the words of Sandra Coney, "It was a culture of the body, rather than the mind" (as cited in Bannister, 2005, para. 2). Moreover, Bannister highlighted a semiotic study that was done on New Zealand culture, which pointed out the symbols and icons associated with New Zealand depict tough, rugged masculinity: rugby, summer barbeques, gumboots for rural farmland and so forth. It could be inferred then that the participants' uncomfortableness with expressing emotion does not stem from their individual family dynamics, but rather is deeply rooted in New Zealand culture.

The collective discomfort these New Zealand business owners felt in sharing their emotions with their families is likely tied to their independence and self-efficacy. In their New Zealand based study, McKenzie et al. (2018) found that for some kiwi males the need to portray masculinity and independence is stronger than the need to seek help and emotional support. The individuals in that study felt compelled to sort their issues out themselves and in turn uphold the "masculine narratives around problem solving, independence, and emotional self-sufficiency" (p. 1254). This overlaps strongly with the lived experiences of the participants in this study. When the small business owners spoke of their unwillingness to divulge emotions they often followed with a statement around the expectation to have mental toughness and a 'sort it out' attitude. What was covertly communicated in childhood was an expectation to model the father figure in the family who "had been brought up pretty tough", requiring the young person to emulate this and "work out life a bit for ourself" (John, study participant). Another discovery that McKenzie et al. (2018) made was the discomfort New Zealanders have with self-disclosure, whether that involves doing or receiving the disclosure. They found that when an individual in their study did convey their feelings and emotions this was met by awkwardness from the trusted confidant, which in turn produced shame and embarrassment for the person confiding. Similar scenarios have played out in the small business owners' narratives, for example when Nadia said that disclosing how one was feeling to the siblings in her family would ensure they were "ripped into". Lived experiences of being invalidated while engaging in self-disclosure would discourage future discussion of feelings and emotions, producing discomfort, awkwardness and even shame at the idea.

In discussing communication about feelings and emotions, Luna emphasised that for Pacific Island families mental health is regarded as a non-issue, unlike the tangible attributes of physical health. She credited this with being a key reason why the people within her family were not accustomed to sharing their feelings. Pacific Islanders have reported more occurrences of depressive symptoms and distress than other New Zealanders, with high levels of stigma around mental health (Ataera-Minster & Trowland, 2018). Ataera-Minster and Trowland (2018) found that Pacific peoples sometimes had difficulties in knowing where to go when they were experiencing symptoms of poor mental health. Luna's lived experience indicates that while being uncomfortable with disclosing personal emotions is a theme within New Zealand according to the literature, there is also nuance regarding the cause and manifestation of this within the New Zealand context when considering ethnic minorities.

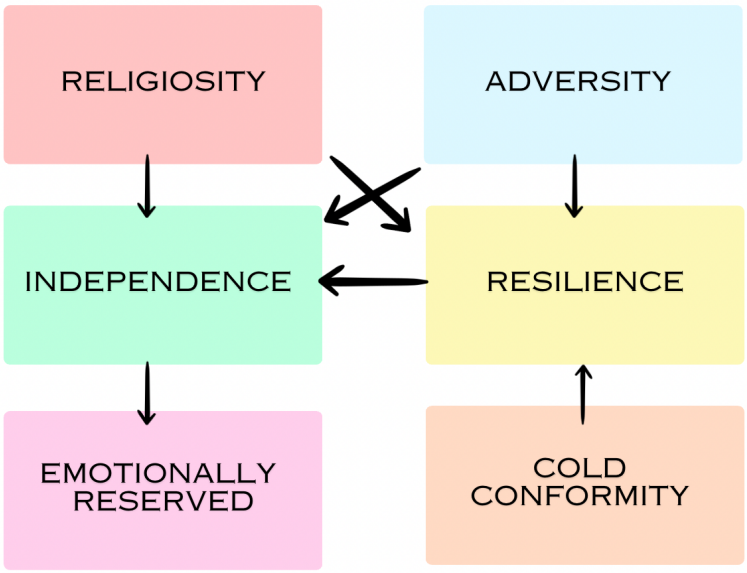
5.1.6. Business Now

It was evident within the findings that the childhood and adolescent experiences of the small business owners in this study continue to influence their business decisions today. The participants who had experiences of cold conformity (see 5.2.4.) and oppressive authority had intentionally created horizontal structures in their businesses and open, free communication. Hayden went so far as to describe the intentional management of his business as the "antonym to the way I was raised". Moreover, Quinn noted that he prefers to see his staff as team members rather than subordinates and, thus, does not exert hierarchical influence. While it could be assumed that individuals would naturally copy the authoritarian stances of their parents as that was the primary communication style they were exposed to, it appears that the participants have made a conscious, purposeful effort to act in more egalitarian ways. In her own phenomenological study, Bann (2009) found that entrepreneurs create environments that align with their personal values, which is juxtaposed against the feelings of powerlessness they have felt in the past. Thus, while parents are responsible for socialising their children to the world, individual participants have felt empowered to make intentionally contrary choices to the communication behaviours they felt were unjust in their formative years.

5.1.7. Interplay of Themes

While the six themes that were generated from this research were each distinct in their characteristics and significance, the above discussion reveals an unequivocal interplay between the themes when connected to the extant literature. How some of the concepts within each theme impact each other are visually depicted below in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Interplay of Themes



Resilience came out strongly in the discussion, which was fed into by religiosity, adversity, and cold conformity. The experience of these three concepts built a strong sense of resilience in the participants. As Foy et al. (2011) claimed, religious faith can help people cope in times of adversity. Thus, it can be inferred that the clear experiences of adversity coupled with positive communication around religion were large contributing factors to the resilience the participants expressed. Further, cold conformity empowered attributes of resilience in the participants who experienced it, through how they worked through and overcame the feelings of restriction and unfairness in their adolescence. For example, although Hayden felt overwhelmingly repressed by his parents, he overcame that season of life to reflect that "They just wanted what was best for me" and he now strives to run a business that is the "antonym" of those experiences.

Resilience in turn fed into the theme of independence, which was also impacted by religiosity and adversity. The independence that the participants demonstrated was a definite product of resilience, through how the participants were adept at solving challenges and issues for themselves when they arose. Regarding independence and adversity, the participants' various early adverse experiences would have generated the situations where they needed to use problem solving, allowing them to harness these independent, resilient skills and attitudes. The discussion also explored the connection between independence and religiosity through how influential religious faith was in enabling resilience and how manifest resilience was as a product of independence.

Finally, independence tied into the emotionally reserved nature of the participants that was highlighted in the emotionally guarded culture theme. The theme of independence from an early age was formed through various examples of relying on the participants' own self over their parents. There is evidence that this could overlap with the discomfort around expressed emotion, as McKenzie et al.'s (2018) New Zealand study details that New Zealanders, especially men, feel the need to display "independence, and emotional self-sufficiency" (p. 1254). Thus, having a stronger natural sense of independence may have perpetuated this culturally normative position.

5.2. Strengths and Limitations

This study set out to explore the lived experiences of small New Zealand business owners from their recollections of the family communication patterns they experienced growing up. Given the dearth of literature on the lived experience of childhood and adolescence for small New Zealand business owners, the primary strength of this study is that it contributes to addressing that gap. Using the lens of Family Communication Patterns (FCP) theory, this research has explored the complexities and nuance of eight individuals' stories, furthering understanding on the impacts of family communication. In doing this, the research highlighted the prevalence of early independence and the ability to overcome adversity in the experience of these small business owners, as well as the subsequent connections to resilience, self-efficacy and 'toughness'. These findings would be helpful to consider for anyone else wanting to study these themes in conjunction with small business ownership. Further, this research could be a useful guide for others wanting to use FCP theory as a framework for qualitative studies.

There are also limitations to this research that should be acknowledged. While the methodological approach only required a small sample of participants, it should be noted that these participants were based in one region of New Zealand. Thus, although this study looks at the New Zealand context, it does not account for regional variances within the country. Further, the purposive and then snowball sampling method used meant that participants came from interrelated business networks. Gravitating towards others in similar networks may indicate shared attitudes and beliefs, therefore making some themes (such as religiosity) more apparent and pronounced. Finally, this research is based on the recollections that the participants could make of their childhood and adolescent experiences. The data can only be as accurate as the participants' memories, which may have been impacted by time and subsequent experiences.

5.3. Recommendations for Further Research

This research has set a strong foundation to leverage off when using FCP theory to investigate the lived experiences of small business owners in childhood and adolescence. Future research could expand the participant pool to other parts of New Zealand and delve further into the themes that came out of this study. For example, this study loosely infers that there is a connection between early independence and overcoming adversity; it would be helpful to explore the prevalence of this intersection to support whether it is a more widely shared experience amongst small New Zealand business owners. Further, despite Braun and Clarke (2021) having claimed that findings from reflexive thematic analysis are "softly generalisable" (p. 145), it would be misleading to suggest that these qualitative findings are in any way representative of the population (Bann, 2009). Using a mixed methods approach would enable a researcher to take the themes identified in this study and much more accurately assess their generalisability for the wider population of small business owners in New Zealand.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Small business owners are integral to the vitality of the New Zealand economy. Their stories provide valid insight into the lived experiences of people who have undertaken the entrepreneurial challenge and reward of business ownership. Exploring these lived experiences in the context of childhood and adolescence has allowed for the unpacking of what fundamental family communication patterns have sculpted, influenced, and ultimately empowered these small business owners to pursue their enterprises. This study took a well cited tool for investigation – Family Communication Patterns Theory – and adapted it to the purposes of phenomenologically exploring these lived childhood experiences of small New Zealand business owners. In turn, the research indicated areas that FCP theory could be further strengthened by incorporating the nuance that personal autonomy and independence brings to family communication.

In looking deeply into the experience of individual small business owners through their recollections of the family communication patterns that took place in their formative years, six distinguishable themes were generated. Independence from an early age was evident, as the small business owners recalled experiences that conveyed resilience, self-efficacy, and problem solving. Nuanced family dynamics and the subsequent adversity that many participants experienced was a likely driver of this resilience building. Communication about religious beliefs was also prominent in childhood, with many of the business owners carrying these same beliefs and associated values into adulthood. Inflections of either cold or warm conformity came through the participants stories, as did a discomfort in disclosing emotion. Finally, it was evident that the family communication patterns experienced in early life have had carry over effects in adult life and business ownership. These themes powerfully demonstrate how the communication patterns exercised in early life have shaped and influenced the lived experience of these small New Zealand business owners. In turn, this research contributes to a greater understanding of what constitutes the lived experience of a small business owner in New Zealand from a communication perspective.

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Appendix A – Information Sheet

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

INFORMATION SHEET

Conversing and conforming: A qualitative study on the connection between family communication patterns and small business ownership

The Researcher
Natalia Fordyce is a postgraduate student at Massey University, completing a Master of Business Studies (Communication). Dr Niki Murray, from the School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing, is the supervisor for this research project.

The Research
The aim driving this research is to explore what family communication patterns small New Zealand business owners experienced in their formative years before adulthood. The research will contribute to a greater understanding on why some family types appear to produce business owners; to date the literature has only touched on this through plausible assumptions, rather than qualitatively focusing on the lived experiences of individuals.

The Participants
To participate in this study an individual must be:

- A current business owner who has less than 20 employees at the time of the interview.
- A New Zealand citizen who has spent the majority of their childhood and adolescence living in New Zealand.
- Eighteen years or older.

The Process
When a participant has agreed to take part in this study a time will be confirmed to have an interview either in person or via video conferencing software, such as Zoom. All participants will be provided with this information sheet and a consent form before the interview is conducted. Written consent must be obtained before the interview can commence. Participants will also be asked to fill out a basic demographic information form to assist the research, although they can opt out of answering some or all of these questions if desired.

Each interview will be approximately one hour in duration and the participant can stop it at any time. The interview will be recorded and a subsequent transcript (completed by the researcher) will be given to the participant in the following weeks for them to make any amendments they wish. Extracts and findings will be used in the researcher's thesis and submitted to the Massey Business School for assessment. All recordings will be deleted after the assessment has been conducted.

The researcher can be contacted at any point to clarify and provide updates on the research:
Natalia Fordyce [redacted]

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 in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.
If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix B – Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Conversing and conforming: A qualitative study on the connection between family communication patterns and small business ownership

Participant Declaration:

I have read the Information Sheet provided and understand why I am participating in this research project. The details of this research project have been explained to me and my questions about it have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I can ask questions at any time and decline to answer any questions in the interview and/or on the basic demographic information form.

I have been given enough time to consider my participation in this research project and acknowledge that my participation is completely voluntary.

I understand that, unless I decline to provide my email address, I will be sent a copy of the transcription of my interview and will have ten business days to make amendments. I understand that I can make amendments and redactions, but not additions, to the content of the transcript.

I confirm that I am over the age of 18.

I confirm that I am a current business owner with less than 20 employees at the time of signing.

I _____ [print full name] hereby consent to take part in this research project under the conditions set out in the information sheet that has been provided to me.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix C – Basic Demographic Information Form

BASIC DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM

Conversing and conforming: A qualitative study on the connection between family communication patterns and small business ownership

Participant Name: _____

Participant Age (please circle one): 20 or younger 21 – 29 30 – 39 40 – 49 50 – 59 60 or older

Participant Ethnicity (please circle all that apply): New Zealand European Māori Samoan Cook Islands Māori Tongan Niuean Chinese Indian Other e.g. Dutch, Japanese, Tokelauan

Gender (please circle one): Female Male Another gender

Which country where you born in (please circle one): New Zealand Overseas

If you live in New Zealand but were not born here, when did you first arrive to live in New Zealand?

_____

Marital Status (please circle one): Married De Facto Relationship Widowed Divorced Separated Civil Union Never Married

Education (please circle one):

What is your highest secondary school qualification? E.g. NCEA Level 1, 2 or 3, NZ Higher School Certificate

_____

What is your highest qualification? E.g. Level 4 Certificate, Bachelor's Degree, PhD or other doctoral degree

_____

Appendix D – Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Note: *The following questions have been heavily influenced by Koerner and Fitzpatrick's (2002) version of the Revised Family Communication Patterns (RFCP) instrument. However, the questions have been adapted for qualitative research and will be part of semi-structured interviews. As such, the following questions are only a guideline of the types of questions that will be asked. The interviewer may judiciously omit or add questions based on the organic direction of the interview, as is expected of the semi-structured style. Further, questions that arise in one interview may be added to the schedule of future interviews to probe whether this new area is a commonality among the participant sample.*

Reference:

Koerner, A. F., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (2002). Understanding family communication patterns and family functioning: The roles of conversation orientation and conformity orientation. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *26*(1), 36–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2002.11679010

Contextual Questions:

1. Could you please start off by telling me a bit about the small business you own currently and what it's all about?
   a. Prompt: What was your journey to starting this business?
   b. Prompt: Have you always wanted to be a business owner?

2. What does your day-to-day look like as a small business owner?

3. How would you describe your experience of childhood and adolescence? For example, did you grow up in a traditional two parent household, how many siblings did you have etc.
   a. Prompt: What does family look like or mean to you?

4. What was your perspective of business ownership growing up?
   a. Prompt: Did your parents/grandparents/influential family member own a small business themselves?

Exploratory Questions (Conversation Orientation)

5. In your family did you often talk about topics like politics and religion openly?
   a. Prompt: What did those conversations consist of OR why do you think those conversations were avoided?
   b. Prompt: Did you feel as though it was acceptable to voice disagreement to other family members opinions on politics and religion?

6. Did you ever hear your parents say things like "Every member of the family should have some say in family decisions?"

a. Prompt: If this wasn't spoken was it implicitly felt or did you feel the opposite?

7. Did your parents ever ask for your opinion when the family was talking about something? Do you have examples of this?

8. Did your parents ever encourage you to challenge their ideas and beliefs?
   a. Prompt: What did this look like?

9. Did your parents ever say things like "You should always look at both sides of an issue."?
   a. Prompt: If this was not explicitly said, did you feel encouraged to look at multiple perspectives on something growing up, or were things portrayed as quite black and white?

10. Did you feel comfortable telling your family members what you were thinking about things? If so, which family members?
    a. If you feel comfortable sharing, what did those conversations involve?

11. Did you feel as though you could talk to your parents about anything and no topic was off limits?
    a. Prompt: If not, what topics were off limit?
    b. Prompt: If yes, can you recall how your parents responded when you raised something taboo?

12. How frequently, if ever, did you talk about your feelings and emotions as a family or within the family?
    a. Prompt: Did you regularly talk about how your day was as a family somewhere like the dinner table?
    b. Prompt: Were there family members you were more comfortable with sharing your feelings and emotions with?
    c. Prompt: Did you feel you could be really transparent about your emotions or did you keep some repressed or hidden?
    d. Prompt: Do you think that your parents were transparent with their own emotions?

13. Can you recall any long, relaxed conversations with your parents about nothing in particular?

14. Did you enjoy talking to your parents, even when you were disagreeing?

15. Did you ever talk about your plans and hopes for the future together as a family/ with your parents?
    a. Prompt: Did this involve discussions about business ownership?

Exploratory Questions (Conformity Orientation)

16. Do you feel as if your parents expected you to obey them without question on really important matters?

17. Did your parents usually have the last word in the house? Can you recall a time this happened?

18. Did your parents feel that it was really important that they were the authority figure and the boss in the house?
    a. Prompt: Did you ever hear them say things like 'my house, my rules' or 'you'll do XYZ while you're under my roof'?
    b. Were there any moments that you challenged their authority?

19. Did your parents ever become irritated with you if your views were different than there's?

20. If your parents did not approve of something, did they just not really want to know about it?

21. Did you ever hear your parents say things like "You'll know better when you grow up"".

22. Was there a sentiment in your household that a child should not argue with adults?

23. Did your parents ever say things like "there are some things that just shouldn't be talked about"?

24. Did your parents ever say things like "You should give in on arguments rather than risk making people mad"?

Additional Questions (if time permits):

25. If your parents had a business of their own, did you ever work for it growing up?
    a. Prompt: What was your job?
    b. Prompt: Were you expected to comply with exactly how your parents ran the business, or did you have some autonomy?
    c. Prompt: Was there a feeling growing up that your parents would quite like it if you (or a sibling) took over the family business one day?

Appendix E – Low Risk Ethics Notification

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

21/10/2022

Dear: Natalia Fordyce

Re: Low Risk Notification - 4000026819 - Conversing and conforming: A qualitative study on the connection between family communication patterns and small business ownership.

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our database for inclusion in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please contact a Research Ethics Administrator.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"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 in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note, if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand T 06 951 6841; 06 95106840
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animalethics@massey.ac.nz; gtc@massey.ac.nz