Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
ELDER CARE, SELF-EMPLOYED WOMEN AND WORK-FAMILY BALANCE

An exploration using work-family border theory

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Studies In Human Resource Management

At Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Josephine Emily Bourke

2009
Abstract

Despite work-life balance being an area of interest to many researchers, there is little reference to any effects related specifically to elder care. Current demographics indicate that the proportion of elderly in the community is increasing, and with greater workforce participation (particularly among women workers) the availability of family caregivers is less guaranteed. Women are more likely to be responsible for elder care, and as they seek to manage their work and life, are also more likely to seek workplace flexibility, sometimes through self-employment.

The effect that elder care may be having on the work-life balance of self-employed women is the focus of this research project. Using work-family border theory as a lens, this research documented the effect that elder care had on the lives of a group of self-employed women who also had elder care responsibilities. Eight women from the Wellington region participated in this research, which was carried out from a broadly phenomenological perspective. Each participant shared information, using a case study approach, about their business and elder care responsibilities. The results of this research indicate the profound effect of emotions in the elder care situation, and also the effect of expectations from others whose influences affected the ability of the participants to achieve work-life balance.
Acknowledgements

I wish to thank a lot of people who contributed to this research. To begin with, I thank the participants, who shared their experiences with me. I must also thank my supervisors, Karl Pajo and Kate Lewis, without whom this project would not have been completed.

Finally, I wish to thank my family. Particular thanks go to Rona, whose increasing frailty in old age led me to this project, Denis, who has supported me throughout, and Natalie, whose example in overcoming difficulties needed to be seen to be believed.
Table of Figures

Figure One: Total employees by enterprise size........................................13

Figure Two: The research approach.......................................................32

Figure Three: Summary of participant business details.........................38

Figure Four: An overview of the proactive approach
               To work-life balance...............................................................41
## Contents

Abstract............................................................................................................................... ii  
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................ iii 
Table of Figures ............................................................................................................. iv  
Contents.............................................................................................................................. 1  
Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................................................... 3  
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature .............................................................................. 7  
  2.0 Overview ................................................................................................................... 7  
  2.1 Elder care ................................................................................................................ 9  
  2.2 Small Business ...................................................................................................... 13  
  2.3 Border theory ......................................................................................................... 16  
    2.3.1 Borders themselves ...................................................................................... 17  
    2.3.2 Managing roles, domains and the influence of identity ......................... 20  
    2.3.3 The proactive and enactive approach ....................................................... 23  
    2.3.4 Self-employment ......................................................................................... 25  
  2.4 Review ................................................................................................................... 28  
Chapter 3: Research method .......................................................................................... 30  
  3.0 Overview ................................................................................................................ 30  
  3.1 The research approach ......................................................................................... 32  
    3.1.1 Data Collection ......................................................................................... 33  
    3.1.2 Strategies to enhance credibility ............................................................... 34  
    3.1.3 Coding and analysis ............................................................................... 35  
  3.2 Selection of participants ....................................................................................... 37  
    3.2.1 Participants ............................................................................................... 37  
  3.3 Review ................................................................................................................... 39  
Chapter 4: Results and Analysis ..................................................................................... 40  
  4.0 Overview ................................................................................................................ 40  
  4.1 Participant details ................................................................................................. 42  
  4.2 The Proactive Participant ..................................................................................... 50  
    4.2.1 Borders ....................................................................................................... 51  
    4.2.2 Flexibility ................................................................................................... 53  

1
Chapter 4: Challenges

4.3 Other influences

4.3.1 Emotions and Identity

4.3.2 Other domain members

4.4 Balance

4.4.1 Conflicts and Strategies

4.4.2 Costs

4.5 Review

Chapter 5: Conclusions

Appendices

Appendix 1: Reflection on the research

Appendix 2: Background information for Participation in Research

Appendix 3 - Interview Protocol

Appendix 4 - Table of main themes

References