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# *Self-Employment: the Panacea for a Woman's Work-Life Balance?*

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Anne Annink  
Utrecht, 2011

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June 22nd, 2011

Research in Public Administration and Organizational Science  
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It's the end of the college year: time to draw up the balance sheet. I am happy to present to you my master thesis 'Self-employment: the panacea for a woman's work-life balance?', which I wrote for my studies Research in Public Administration and Organizational science at the Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University. Looking back at this year, I feel very fortunate. My gains do not only consist of this completed master thesis (and hopefully my degree), but also of a wealth of experiences.

I enjoyed using my personal capital to generate ideas, define a research problem, and develop a research plan. The part I enjoyed most was interviewing the research participants: self-employed women in various sectors, working solo, with personnel, or a business partner, either working from home or at an office outside, women who just started or already ran a business for 20 years. I enjoyed looking for the right questions and staying in contact with my own value and sensitivity, exploring women's life and experiences.

My wealth of knowledge increased significantly this year. I started with a great interest in the work-life balance theme and some vague research ideas. In December there was a concrete research plan. From January I started gathering data. In March I had 37 hours of tape recording, which I transcribed into almost 250 pages of data. Experiencing "wealth doesn't buy happiness", I started coding and summarizing the data into a coherent piece. The value of this thesis is not in its amount, but in the depth of understanding self-employed women's work-life balance experiences.

Turning to the right side of my balance sheet, I must confess I did make a lot of liabilities this year. The main sum consists of the contribution of the self-employed women I interviewed. Thank you for your openness during these personal, sensitive, and inspiring conversations!

Tram Tran, self-employed owner of vrouwen-ondernemen.nl, reflected on my first ideas and findings from her own experiences and stories of hundreds of other women. Thank you for your practice based contribution!

A high value liability is the contribution of my supervisor Laura den Dulk, who not only read and commented on my thesis over and over, but also provided me with extra resources. Being her student assistant as a side job, she provided me with insights in the university working environment. In May, we travelled to Tampere (Finland) to present our paper about the role of autonomy in women's work-life balance at the Community, Work, and Family Conference 2011. Beside the sauna and blackberries, I was able to enjoy inspiring research presentations, meet interesting people (whom I referred to in my own research), and practice my presenting skills.

Lastly, I want to thank my family and friends to check my balance during the year. Drawing up this balance sheet, I'm looking back on a successful year!

Anne Annink,  
Utrecht, June 2011

## Summary

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In today's society the number of self-employed people is rising (Kösters, 2009). Especially women increasingly start their own business in order to improve their work-life balance, which is defined as "satisfaction with fulfilling the personal goals in both the work and life domains, by being able to use appropriate means" (Campbell Clark, 2000:751). This Dutch interview study (N=24) examines the experiences of self-employed women with children managing paid work and other life domains. How do Dutch self-employed women experience their work-life balance and how can differences in experiences be explained from an organizational sociological perspective? Instead of considering self-employed as one group, various organizational factors are taken into account, such as type of self-employment, sector, location of the office, and years of being self-employed. Women's experiences are studied in relation to their organizational context.

Overall, Dutch self-employed women are satisfied with their work-life balance, but are also struggling with it over time. According to self-employed women, work-life balance is a process rather than a static, measurable moment in time. Furthermore, since personal goals vary among self-employed, the meaning of a balance is subjective. Women who were aware of their personal goals in the work, family, social, and personal domain were better able to balance and act in accordance to their values during the day. Women who were less aware of their personal goals were mainly reacting and rebalancing when they did not feel well. Self-employed women's personal goals in all life domains were often reflected in their jobs. Especially their priorities in personal and social life were similar to their priorities in work. Therefore, women did not experience their life as compartmentalized in various domains. This might be different from organizational employees, who have to adapt to the organization's culture, including rules, thought patterns, and behaviour (Campbell Clark, 2000).

Although the self-employed women in this study felt in charge of their life and responsible for the choices they made, the organizational context did influence the resources and demands which respectively enhanced and hindered their work-life balance. Autonomy is considered to be the main resource of self-employed. The degree of women's job, spatial, and time autonomy varied among women and was influenced by the contents of their work, the relation to their clients, working hours, the location of their office, and whether they needed to consider, share tasks and responsibilities with a business partner or personnel. The skills women used to define, reflect on, and redefine personal goals in all life domains were generated in their work. Women in training and development applied coaching techniques, women in business services scheduled, planned and set targets, and women in the health care sector were sensitive to their feelings of being balanced. In commercial service's women's main goal was success, which implied they worked hard and spend little time at other domain goals. Since self-employed women's life was not compartmentalized, other resources, such as social support and faith, were generated in the work and life domains simultaneously. Social support came from the spouse (family), friends (social), and business partner (work). Faith was generated by life experience and the years being self-employed.

Furthermore, demands were related to women's organizational context, mainly to the nature of the job. Women experienced psychological and emotional strain, unfavorable working hours, and dependency on clients as a demand. Furthermore, the position of women being the breadwinner and other societal developments were hindering women's work-life balance experience. All women said their own restrictive beliefs and thoughts, such as perfectionism and guilt, to be the main factor that hindered them in pursuing goals in the work and other life domains.

To conclude, organizational characteristics such as the sector, nature of the job, the type of self-employment, and the location of the office, influence self-employed women's work-life balance. Self-employed women's organizational context influences their ability to define and reflect on goals, and provides them with specific resources and demands. Therefore, findings about self-employed women's work-life balance cannot be generalized. Self-employment in general is not a panacea for a work-life balance. It is highly recommended to read the self-employment package leaflet and consider various organizational contexts.

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## 1. Introduction

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Individuals are increasingly looking to balance their responsibilities at work and in their personal life. Especially women do not view their job as a justification for attending less to their families, household work, and other social activities (Tausig and Fenwick, 2001). Self-employment might then look like an attractive solution. Self-employed have less clear boundaries between the work and home domain than organizational employees. They are responsible for dividing their time and energy between work and life domains themselves, and they have no boss who determines their working hours. To most women becoming self-employed means having flexible work schedules, which offers possibilities to stay active on the labor market and take care of the children at the same time (FNVzpp, 2009). In this study, I am interested in women's experience in combining various life domains. A work-life balance is defined as "satisfaction with fulfilling the personal goals in both the work and life domain, by being able to use appropriate means" (Campbell Clark, 2000:751).

Scholars found that self-employment is mainly appreciated because of a high degree of autonomy (Benz and Frey, 2003). Autonomy, or "self-determination", is related to the free choice of one's own actions or states at work (2003:11). Self-employed enjoy their work more because they are freer to select tasks they find interesting in their jobs, and have more freedom as well to find the resources to fulfill their goals both in work and private life. In the Netherlands 13% of the total labor force is self-employed (Statline CBS, 2010). Over the last few decades, the number of self-employed is rising; especially amongst women, who contributed to 32% of self-employed in 2009 (Kösters, 2009).

However, self-employment has not only benefits but also costs. While self-employed women enjoy greater autonomy and flexibility, they also experience greater psychological involvement in the work role, due to their personal responsibility for the survival of the enterprise. A higher job involvement may create incompatible pressure that cannot be resolved by autonomy or schedule flexibility. Extra stress may further be caused by the economic crisis. Orders and incomes may significantly be reduced, because employers will first cut down on extra and external workers (De Veer and Francke, 2009). Consequently, self-employed women may even experience greater work-family conflict than organizational employees (Parasuraman and Simmer, 2001). The question arises whether self-employment is a panacea for a woman's work-life balance. In this study, Dutch women's work-life balance experiences are studied from an organizational sociologically perspective. This means that self-employed are studied in relation to their organizational environment. How are women's experiences influenced by their work conditions?

Most research on work-life balance has been conducted among workers who are employed by contract by an organization. It is unclear whether these findings can be generalized to other populations, such as self-employed (female) workers. Other patterns might be found, since their work situation differs in many respects. Self-employed "maintain economic activity which is outside any relation of subordination, under that individual's own responsibility, and in return for remuneration paid to that individual directly" (Cadenau, 2008:7). They do not have a contract with specified working hours, the number of days off, and the pay they receive for their work. Self-employed work longer and more irregular hours, they have more flexible work schedules and report higher levels of perceived job control and job insecurity, and lower levels of social support compared to employed workers (Taris, Geurts, Kompier, Lagerveld, Blonk, 2008). Understanding experiences of self-employed is relevant because self-employed have different rhythms of home and family, a different pace of the work, design of the work-space, and the need to deliberately create and maintain boundaries between work and home (Myrie and Daly, 2009). Since self-employed have no employer, they cannot benefit from arrangements such as days off, pensions, third party insurances, cash sickness benefits, and disabilities for example (UWV, Institute for employee insurances, 2011).

The few researchers who studied work-life balance experiences of self-employed considered these workers as one group. Extant research shows that a better work life balance is a more important reason to become self-employed for women than for men (Milkie and Peltola, 1999; Myrie and Daly, 2009). However, there are no theoretical explanations for different work-life experiences

among self-employed (Tuttle and Gar, 2009). Instead of considering all self-employed as one group, this qualitative and explorative study focuses on women's different experiences with work-life balance. 24 women were interviewed, who varied regarding type of self-employment, sector, location of the office, and years being self-employed.

The central question to be answered is "How do Dutch self-employed women experience their work-life balance and how can differences in experiences be explained from an organizational sociological perspective?"

## 1.1 Routing

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In subsequent sections of this thesis, I will first present the problem definition in chapter 2. Chapter 3 contains the theoretical framework in which this study is positioned. Next, in chapter 4 the methodological approach of this research is outlined. In chapter 5, the results and analysis of this study are presented. In chapter 6 the main question of this study will be answered. Chapter 7 includes a discussion of current theories and the findings of this study. In chapter 8, recommendations for self-employed in order to find a balance will be given. Finally, in chapter 9, I will reflect on my own work-life balance during this period of research.

## 2. Problem definition

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### 2.1 Research objective

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The main objective of this research is to provide insight into the experiences of self-employed women in the Netherlands regarding their work-life balance.

This thesis aspires to present, explore, and understand women's work-life experiences in their organizational contexts. The empirical part presents the domains women are engaged in. The analytical part of this thesis explores their experiences and gives an understanding in the influence of organizational context. The conclusion and discussion clarify theoretical contributions of the thesis. The findings are practically translated in recommendations for (future) self-employed (women). The thesis ends with a personal reflection on my own process in this research.

### 2.2. Research question

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How do Dutch self-employed women experience their work-life balance and how can differences in experiences be explained from an organizational sociological perspective?

#### **Sub questions:**

1. What constitutes the domains of work and life according to self-employed women?
2. How do self-employed women experience their work-life balance?
3. Which resources enhance self-employed women's work-life balance?
4. Which demands hinder self-employed women's work-life balance?
5. How do self-employed women shape and manage borders between the work and life domain(s) and how does this affect their work life balance?

### 2.3. Relevance

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This research is relevant from the perspective of science, society, and public administration and organizational science.

#### 2.3.1. Scientific relevance

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Due to recent developments in society, work-life balance is an issue for many workers (Kossek, Lewis, Hammer, 2010). Research on this topic is very recent and many different terms are used to describe and measure this complex phenomenon. Some researcher consider a balance as a certain state or moment in time which can be measured in terms of time, energy, involvement, and satisfaction with work and family roles (Marks and MacDermid's, 1996; Kirchmeyer, 2000; Greenhaus, Collins, Shaw, 2003). The aim of this research, however, is not to measure a work-life balance but to understand how women experience this process. A first contribution is made by taking a subjective perspective and by exploring the factors influencing their experiences (Campbell Clark, 2000; Greenhaus and Allen, 2006, Prottas and Thompson, 2006). Second, whereas other researchers consider "life" as home or family, the current research will expand this definition by exploring various life domains (Geurts and Demerouti, 2003; Languilaire, 2009). Third, research to date only found interaction effects of work influencing the home domain and home influencing the work domain in organizational employed workers' situation. This research will contribute by exploring the resources and demands which enhance or hinder self-employed women's experiences (Parasuraman and Simmers, 2001; Taris et al., 2008; Tuttle and Gar, 2009). Finally, this research will take into account various organizational context factors in exploring work-life experiences. Current theories will be used to explore whether they are applicable and generalizable to self-employed's situations (Myrie

and Daly, 2009). This explorative interview study includes hypotheses to be tested in future quantitative research.

### 2.3.2. Societal relevance

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Self-employment seems a solution for finding a work-life balance for many workers. The number of self-employed is rising (Kösters, 2009) and especially women hope to become better able to combine their work and personal life (Milkie and Peltola, 1999). However, in practice, self-employment may also lead to dis-balance because of high involvement in the business (Parasuraman and Simmer, 2001). Research into the experiences of work-life balance of self-employed women might be useful for women who are thinking of starting their own business. It provides insight in the conditions facilitating a work-life balance. Furthermore, it may help working self-employed by providing insight in the resources and demands influencing their balance. This research becomes even more significant keeping in mind the rising number of self-employed and the difficulties they encounter due to the economic crisis (De Veer and Francke, 2009).

### 2.3.3. Public Administration and Organizational scientific relevance

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For the field of public administration, this research provides insight in the resources which enhance self-employed women's work-life balance. These results might be useful to stimulate entrepreneurship among this group. The current research contributes to organizational science because it provides insight in self-employed and small organizations. Research into self-employed is very limited, especially in explorative interview studies, because this group is very difficult to monitor. To illustrate this, the in the past few decades often used Dutch term "zzp-er" (self-employed without personnel) has only been defined last October (SER, 2010). Finally, the results of this research might also be useful to organizations to improve their work-life policies, in order to prevent their female employees to quit their job and start their own business.

### 3. Theoretical framework

The literature study is meant to build a theoretical framework supporting the data gathering and results. With the help of former research, topics for the interviews with self-employed women were created. Theories are used to explore self-employed women's experiences and to see whether findings of studies into organizational employees can be generalized to self-employed.

Section 1 provides background information about self-employed women in the Netherlands. Section 2 will focus on the discussion about various definitions of a work-life balance and ways to use this concept. Furthermore, theories will be used to find explanations for differences in experiences. In section 3, Voydanoff (2004)'s theory of resources and demands in the work and life domain is discussed. Resources and demands may respectively enhance and hinder one's work-life balance. Section 4 is about the field of tension between the autonomy of self-employed and the danger of work-intensification. In section 5 the Border theory of Campbell Clark (2000) will be discussed, which provides insight in the process of navigating between home and life domains. Finally, section 6 contains the conclusions of the literature study and its implications for the current study.

#### 3.1 Self-employed women in the Netherlands

This section provides background information about the participants of study: self-employed women in the Netherlands. These women differ to a certain extent in their individual profile, home situation, and organizational context as will be discussed next.

##### 3.1.1. An average woman

Who are these women who choose to be self-employed? In the Netherlands 13% of the total labor force (7.373.000 persons in 2009) is self-employed (CBS, 2010). Of these self-employed, 32% is female, a percentage which has been increasing during the last decades (Kösters, 2009). Most women, 73%, are solo self-employed (workers without employees). 21% is a small employer (self-employed with personnel) and 6% works in a business together with a -or her- partner, or parents (OECD, 2009).

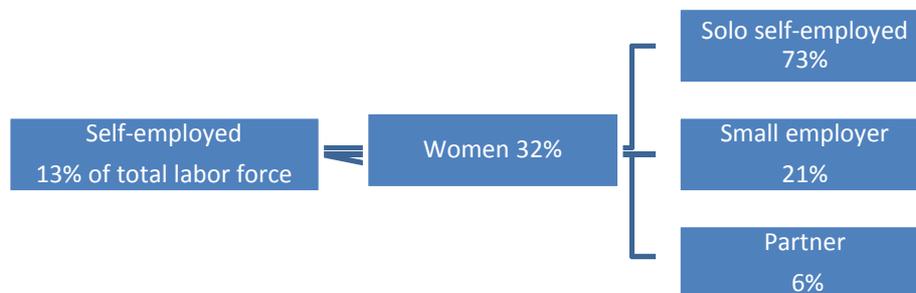


Figure 1: Percentages of various types of self-employed women (CBS, 2010).

83% of all self-employed is a native Dutch and between 35 and 45 years old. The average age of women starting up a firm is 39. At this age, women often have young children. Most of them are middle or highly educated and work many hours a week: 74% (compared to 57% of organizational employees) works 35 hours or more (CBS, 2010).

Looking at trends, in 2009 especially in the service industry self-employment increased. An increase of self-employment in health care, home care and childcare can be explained by the necessity to subscribe at the Chamber of Commerce which was not necessary before 2009 (Dutch Chamber of Commerce, 2010). Some women already worked in these sectors, but became registered and therefore 'visible' after subscribing. Women who are self-employed tend to be concentrated in feminine sectors such as retail and personal services (also in health and wellbeing) (Cadenau, 2008).

In short, the average self-employed woman is solo self-employed. She has a native Dutch background, is 40 years old and has young children. She is highly educated and works more than 35 hours per week. There is a great probability she has a business in personal services.

The personality of self-employed is often characterized by an autonomous drive to achieve and create for its own sake. Reviewing the literature on entrepreneurial trait research, Brockhaus (1982) identified three attributes consistently associated with entrepreneurial behavior: need for achievement, internal locus of control (perceived control over events), and a risk-taking propensity (innovativeness). Beugelsdijk and Noorderhaven (2005) found in an empirical study that entrepreneurs can be characterized by an incentive structure based on individual responsibility and effort, and a strong work ethic.

The decision to be self-employed has traditionally been thought of as being caused by two reasons. One reason is that self-employment occurs as the result of an individual being unable to obtain employment in the market due either to human capital limitations or structural constraints. In other words, workers are forced into self-employment. The other possibility is that self-employment is chosen by persons with particular abilities, such as advanced education and previous work experience, who find self-employment a desirable and viable option (Tuttle and Gar, 2009). According to Parasuraman and Simmer (2001), women become self-employed because of a need for achievement, autonomy, and self-fulfillment. An important reason is being more conducive to balancing work and family role responsibilities. Also Kok, Ichou, and Verheul (2010) mention the work-life balance, besides intrinsic, push, and opportunist motives, as an important reason to become self-employed. The increasing need for a work-life balance will be discussed in the next section.

### 3.2. The need for a Work-life balance

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It is difficult to determine at what point in history workers' work-life balance became of interest to scholars. In the US, research in this field began in the late 1970, when Americans experienced limited job autonomy and increased mental and physical strain. Furthermore, in this period practices to support equal employment emerged, such as the Civil Right Act, Pregnancy Discrimination Act and Age Discrimination legislation. These acts were a reaction to the increased number of women and older workers in the labour force, which resulted in a third of all employees caring for elders and children simultaneously. In Europe, there was less emphasis on work-life initiatives in organizations, because gender equity in the workplace and the home was enhanced by more progressive state policies and regulation (Kossek, Lewis, Hammer, 2010).

#### 3. 2.1. Trends in society

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Western societies are characterized by rising living standards over the last few decades. The rise of global competition, technological changes, and flexibility led to a growing number of skilled jobs and rising wages. Flexibility allows employers to match working hours of employees to times when customers most need them. Also employees are able to create their own working schedules with the aid of portable devices. However, many workers have to work more intensely, experience greater mental strain, job insecurity, and less job control (Kossek et al., 2009).

Also in the private life individual's demands are increasing. Dual earner families and female labour market participation are rising because more people try to combine paid work with caring responsibilities or other activities in life. The number of single earner families has diminished. Furthermore, individuals increasingly need to adapt because life gets more complicated. The boundaries between personal life and work become blurred by increased flexibility and technology, such as flexible working hours, and email and mobile phones (Peters, Den Dulk and Van der Lippe, 2009). The recent interest in the work-life interface led to different concepts to explain the relation between different domains of life, which will be discussed in the next section.

### 3.2.2. The work-life balance defined

The term “work-life balance” is a much discussed concept and used in various ways. Balance is sometimes used as a noun (when one is encouraged to achieve balance), and other times as a verb (to balance various demands) or an adjective (as in a balanced life). Most people interpret balancing as cutting back on work to spend more time on family or leisure (Greenhaus, Collins, Shaw, 2003). Often, it is thought to be in an individual’s best interest to live a balanced life (Kofodimos, 1993). Work-life balance often refers to a harmonious interface between different life domains, or ‘... a lack of conflict or interference between work and family roles’ (Frone, 2003: 145). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985: 77) define a work-life conflict as ‘a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect’. Recently, the terms “work-life enrichment” and “work-life facilitation” have been introduced, which stress positive interdependencies between work and life. This means that work can benefit from private life, and private life can benefit from work (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Grzywacz and Marks, 2000).

Discussion about the definition of work-life balance is also about whether work and life are distinct spheres or not. Some authors oppose to the term work-life balance because work is a part of life (Carlson, Grzywacz and Zivnuska, 2009). Others argue that a balance should include other domains as well, because work and life are not the only domains individuals are engaged in. The same problem occurs when using the term “work-family balance”, referring to work and family being the main domains individuals are balancing (Ransome, 2007; Languilaire, 2009).

Greenhaus et.al (2003) found a number of common elements between the definitions of balance. The first is the notion of equality between experiences in the work role and in other roles. Marks and MacDermid’s (1996) call this equality of role commitments “evenhanded alertness”. Balance is achieved when – positive and negative – weights are equally divided between roles. Equality concerns input and outcomes. The inputs are personal resources, such as attention, time, involvement, and commitment (Kirchmeyer, 2000). Outcomes are frequently described in terms of satisfaction. Positive role balance assesses the extent to which an individual is equally satisfied in all life roles. Greenhaus et.al (2003) divided role engagement into three components of balance:

- Time balance: an equal amount of time devoted to work and family roles.
- Involvement balance: an equal level of psychological involvement in work and family roles.
- Satisfaction balance: an equal level of satisfaction with work and family roles.

They conceptualize balance as independent of an individual’s desires or values. This means that they believe that an individual who gives substantially more precedence to one role than the other is relatively imbalanced even if the distribution of commitment to family and work is highly consistent with what the individual wants or values. However, it is the question whether such a balance is healthy or not. In this research, it is not about an objective distribution of time and involvement between roles, but about the experience of this distribution. Therefore, a work-life balance is subjective.

However, defining balance as being ‘in the eye of the beholder’ also has several drawbacks. Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, and Kacmar (2007) argued that a conceptualization that separates an individual’s experience from the social context wherein it arises cannot capture the dynamic and complex realities of daily work and life. A self-appraised balance is difficult to observe or measure and might be at the expense of another, for example a partner who has to take care of the household. Practically, it is difficult to design systematic strategies to promote work-life balance if it is in ‘the eye of the beholder’. Furthermore, responsibility for a poor balance is not only influenced by an individual but also by many social and structural factors (Carlson, Grzywacz and Zivnuska, 2009).

This interview study is about the experiences of self-employed women, which implies that a subjective interpretation of balance is useful. The aim of the research is not to measure balance, but to understand the factors that (not) contribute to it. The underlying assumption is that individuals can shape to some degree the nature of the work and home domains, and the borders and bridges between them, in order to create a desired balance. Therefore, Campbell Clark (2000) argues,

balance is the consequence of border and domain management. It comes with fulfilling the personal ends in both domains, by being able to use appropriate means (Ibid.). Also Greenhaus and Allen (2006) interpret a balance as a subjective fit between one's life objective and one's satisfaction and achievement of these objectives in the two domains. In this research, work-life balance is defined as "satisfaction with fulfilling the personal goals in both the work and life domain, by being able to use appropriate means" (Campbell Clark, 2000:751). The terms life and home are used interchangeably, but both refer to the private domain. Abenroth and Den Dulk (2011) acknowledge that by focusing on overall satisfaction with work-life balance, the significance of work or family life can differ between individuals and that private life encompasses more than the family role alone. In the next section an expanded definition of "life" will be discussed.

### 3.2.3. The "life" in work-life balance

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In this research, the term 'work-life balance' is used, which implies a larger definition than only 'family-life'. Languilaire (2009) found that individuals experience different and various life domains and sub-domains. In his research, middle-managers narrated four domains: the work life, the family life, the social life, and the private life. In accordance to the definition of work-life balance as fulfilling personal ends, the domains are the contexts of fulfilling personal goals. The context exists of roles, activities, and relationships contributing to these goals. The goals of managers in Languilaire's research were work, love and enabling support (family), belongingness and friendship (social), and own wellbeing and development (private). The current research will contribute by describing the life domains according to self-employed women. Resources and demands within these domains might reveal resources and demands, which might explain differences in work-life balance experiences. Resources and demands are discussed in the next section.

## 3.3. Resources and demands in the work and life domain

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Campbell Clark (2000) describes a work-life balance as "satisfaction with fulfilling personal goals in various domains, by being able to use appropriate means". These means can also be referred to as resources, which enhance women's ability to fulfil their goals (Voydanoff, 2004). Women might also experience demands, which hinder them in fulfilling goals. In this section, Voydanoff (2004)'s theory about work-family facilitation and conflict will serve as a framework for discussing variation in resources and demands.

### 3.3.1. Interaction between domains

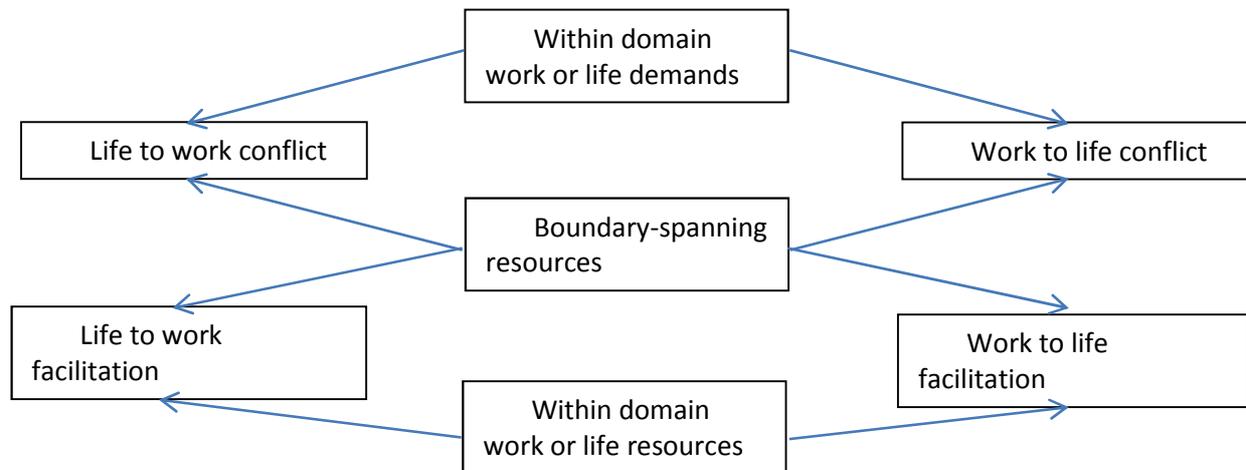
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Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, and Houtman (2003) found an interaction effect between work and life domains. They found that a worker's functioning in one domain is influenced by (negative or positive) load reactions that have built up in the other domain. According to Voydanoff (2004), linkages and processes between microsystems in the home and life domain together comprise a meso system. If borders between the domains are permeable and flexible, characteristics of both domains influence each other. These influencing or interaction processes can be conflicting or facilitating. Both processes are not the opposites of a continuum, but independent constructs. They are determined by the extent to which demands hinder or resources enhance the performance of work and life roles. Conflict refers to an inter-role conflict in which demands of work and family are incompatible in some respect so that participation in one role is more difficult because of participation in the other role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). In accordance to the border theory which will be discussed in section 3.5., it is not about the number of roles, but about the ability to identify with these roles and fulfill the personal goals. Facilitation is a form of synergy in which resources from one role enhance participation in the other role (Voydanoff, 2004: 399).

In recent years, researchers have paid increasing attention to positive interdependencies, or work-family enrichment (also known as enhancement, facilitation, or positive spillover; Frone, 2003; Grzywacz, 2002; Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Kirchmeyer, 1992). The enrichment perspective asserts

that experiences in either role generate resources that may be profitably used in the other role, thereby enhancing the quality of life (Frone, 2003; Powell and Greenhaus, 2006).

According to Voydanoff (2004) both conflict and facilitation can take two forms: from work to life and from life to work. Both forms become visual in the following figure:



**Figure 2: Work-to-life and life-to-work conflict and facilitation (Voydanoff, 2004).**

In the column in the middle three boxes are displayed. Demands refer to structural or psychological claims associated with role requirements, expectations, and norms to which individuals must respond or adapt by exerting physical or mental effort. Resources are structural or psychological assets that may be used to facilitate performance, reduce demands, or generate additional resources (2004: 398). In the centre of the model, *boundary-spanning resources* are mentioned. In Voydanoff (2004)'s model, these include support from the family and the organization for a work-life balance. The current study will explore whether self-employed have such resources.

The observed relationships between the two concepts, work-family facilitation (WFF) and work-family conflict (WFC), to date are minimal (Powell and Greenhaus, 2006). This might be because resources that are generated in one role may not mitigate the primary sources of conflict with the other role. WFC is generally produced either by time pressures or stressors that intrude into another role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). However, particular sources of WFF, such as the acquisition of social capital or the development of a skill, may have no effect on time pressures and other types of stressors. In addition, experiences in a role may simultaneously produce enrichment from the application of one resource and conflict from the depletion of another resource. For example, the presence of young children in the family can facilitate the acquisition of communication skills that enhance work effectiveness but also limit the flexibility one has to meet work responsibilities. In the same vein, a high-pressure work culture might not only increase job performance and skill development that can be applied successfully in the family domain but also produce negative affect at work that interferes with effective functioning in the family role (Powell and Greenhaus, 2006). Campbell Clark's border theory (2000) might be helpful in revealing these processes for self-employed women.

Most of previous research on interaction effects is concentrated on conflict. Researchers increasingly shift to a positive approach, but results are still limited (McMillan, Morris, and Atchley, 2011). In her study, Voydanoff (2004) discusses conflict and facilitation for organizational employed workers in the direction work to family. The current research will expand this perspective by exploring self-employed women's conflict and facilitation processes in both directions. The main focus will be on work to family effects, since only self-employed women will be interviewed. Women might be able to indicate which life variables influence their work-life balance, but other domain members will not be interviewed in this research. Possible resources and demands in the work and life domain of self-employed women, based on existing literature, are discussed in the next sections.

### 3.3.2. Resources and demands in the work domain

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Research to date considers all self-employed as one group, mostly to compare them to organizational employees. However, also self-employed workers differ from each other. In paragraph 3.1.1., individual characteristics are discussed, which might influence women's way of shaping and managing borders (paragraph 3.5.). However, also organizational characteristics such as type of self-employment, location of the office, business experience, and the sector are important to consider (Kok et al., 2010). These conditions might provide resources and demands, which influence self-employed women's experiences with their work-life balance.

Considering type of self-employment, the greater part of all self-employed women, 73%, has no personnel. In general, solo self-employed work more hours than small employers and those with business partners. Solo self-employed are better able to create their own working schedule without consulting employees or a partner (Kösters, 2009). On the other hand, personnel or a partner might be able to take over work in case of unexpected occurrences so a woman can leave.

The location of the office can be *inside the home*, using the house as the workplace, or *outside the home*, using another location as a base for operations (CBS, 2010). It is unknown how many individuals have an office inside the home, but most of these workers are self-employed without personnel and/ or higher educated, such as dentists, architects, accountants, and advocates (Cörvers, 2010). Most at home workers experience that the physical nearness of private life leads to more interaction between the two domains. However, this nearness also facilitates being able to combine work and life better because women have a better feeling of what happens at home (ING 2009). Working inside the home therefore requires different approaches to time and space, as sharing the space needs to be negotiated (Lewis and Cooper 1999). It is unclear whether the results found for self-employed working at home can be generalized to those working outside home (Grzywacz and Marks, 2000; Lewis and Cooper, 1999).

Another factor that might influence the experience of work-life balance is the time being self-employed. Experienced entrepreneurs appear to have more difficulties with combining work and home responsibilities than starters do. This is because experienced entrepreneurs work more hours (60 hours a week on average). They often take their worries about their business with them to the home domain, causing a work-life disbalance (ING, 2009). However, it may also be the other way, arguing that starters need to settle their business. Because everything is still new to them, they might not directly achieve their personal goals in work and life domain. They might not be satisfied with their work-life balance yet.

Self-employed women are mainly working in the sectors of retail and personal services (Cadenau, 2008). In different sectors, the pace of demand and supply varies. For example, in the catering industry, women have to be open 24/7 to be able to serve their clients. Working in health care and well-being sectors, such as a beauty salon, women have to make specific appointments with their clients. Advisory work often concerns a longer trajectory in which tasks are divided in certain periods, and may therefore be combined with other responsibilities more easily. Depending on the sector in which women are working, a woman's economic situation might be another influential factor. In times of crisis, clients will first cut down on extra and external services. Money may be a resource contributing to a work-life balance, since it may provide women with childcare services, a housekeeper, and transport for example. Income might not only come directly from work activities but also from allowances and arrangements provided by the state.

Summarizing, literature shows that type of self-employment, location of the office, business experience, and the sector might provide important resources and demands to consider while studying self-employed women's work-life balance experiences. Conditions that provide resources and demands in life domains will be discussed in the next section.

### 3.3.3. Resources and demands in the life domains

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A balance between work and life comes with being able to fulfil personal goals in all domains. In accordance to Languilaire (2009)'s theory discussed in section 3.2.3., the life domain includes family, social, and personal life. Literature shows that there are several factors which may provide resources

or lead to demands in these domains that influence women's work-life balance. The following are discussed: the spouse, children, and other social contacts.

Self-employed women seem to value the autonomy of working hours and working at or from home so that they can work more hours (FNVzpz, 2009). They accept the consequences of interchanging work and other personal tasks. Women with a spouse are able to share these tasks, but also are less independent. Self-employed women are much more likely to be married than are organizationally employed women (Riele and Souren, 2010). This research includes only women with a spouse, because they are more likely to have to negotiate about boundaries and share the home domain.

Also the presence of children leads to interchanging work and life responsibilities. For example, women with children often work at night. During these hours, less caring is necessary. If caring is necessary, the partner can help. Former research shows that female self-employed without a spouse or children will probably spend less time on the household and caring than women with a spouse and children (Riele, Souren, 2010). Having young children (age 12 or younger) might also be a reason for women to choose self-employment (Green and Cohen 1995). However, in a longitudinal examination of the process by which women choose self-employment, Taniguchi (2002) found only mixed support for this hypothesis. Because most research has shown a positive correlation between the presence of young children and self-employment, and women with children are more likely to experience difficulties with balancing work and life. This research will focus on women with at least one child under the age of 12.

Another factor that might generate resources and demands in the life domains, are social contacts. These contacts might be family, friends or other relations who are able to help women if needed. A study of Marcinkus, Whelan-Berry, and Gordon (2007) into women aged between 35 and 50 shows that women perceive that they experience a higher overall level of personal social support than work-based social support. Most likely, this difference exists because women feel more comfortable asking for support outside the workplace. The study indicates that the women received both instrumental and expressive support from the spouses, family, and friends. Instrumental support from the family domain is primarily childcare from spouse or partner, family, friends, neighbors, babysitters and financial support from spouses or partners and other family members. In the personal domain, women cited emotional support, from spouses or partners, other family members, and friends, as important. Support for their careers was especially important from their spouses or partners, as well as from other family members (Ibid).

Summarizing, the spouse, children, and other social contacts might influence women's resources and demands. Resources and demands also influence women's degree of autonomy, which is discussed in the next section.

### 3.4. Finding the break-even point

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The most important concept related to a self-employed woman's work-life balance is autonomy. Tuttle and Gar (2009) found that self-employment may indirectly influence work-family fit and mental health through higher job satisfaction and increased autonomy. Prottas and Thompson (2006) who distinguishes between organizational employees, small business owners, and independent contractors, found that self-employed achieve greater autonomy than would be available to them as organizational employees. However, only independent contractors appear to benefit from greater autonomy as well as lower levels of job pressure. It is not clear under which conditions self-employed experience more or less autonomy (Hundley, 2001).

Traditionally, autonomy is defined as having the freedom and discretion to decide when, where, and how the job should be carried out (Hackman and Oldham, 1976). Autonomy is often measured by job autonomy and time autonomy. The first is related to the opportunity to learn new things on the job, the creativity of the job, repetitive tasks, the freedom to decide how the job is done and what the job involves, and the inventiveness of the job. The latter refers to freedom to decide when to do their job (Pisljar, Van der Lippe, Den Dulk, 2011). Self-employment is associated

with particular, mainly non pecuniary, benefits. Findings of Benz and Frey (2003) indicate that self-employed enjoy considerable utility from the opportunity of “being their own boss”. The difference in job satisfaction between self-employed and employed people can be explained by the value assigned to autonomy. Benz and Frey (2003) suggest that self-employed people attach a substantial value to their independence, and not because it is associated with superior instrumental outcomes, like higher pay or lower working hours. Rather, autonomy is preferred because it is *procedurally* better than being subject to hierarchical decision-making, and is hence a source of procedural utility. Autonomy is appreciated because of two reasons. First, it is associated with the possibility of working independently. Second, self-employed enjoy autonomy of choice, in the sense that they are freer to select tasks they find interesting, and that they can determine the variety of their tasks as well as when and where they work. Benz and Frey subsume both aspects under the term “self-determination”.

However, autonomy is not a guarantee and can even be a danger to a work-life balance. While self-employed women enjoy greater autonomy and flexibility, they also experience greater psychological involvement in the work role, due to their personal responsibility for the survival of the enterprise. Work intensification may be enabled for self-employed, because flexible working patterns facilitate the exercise of “increased effort employees put into their jobs during the time that they are working” (Burchell, 2002: 72). The intensification of work is generally seen to have negative outcomes for employees, such as stress, psychological health and family tension. In a study of Kelliher and Anderson (2009) all interviewees who worked from home for part of their working week indicated that they exercised greater intensive effort when they worked at home. Generally, this was explained by being able to focus on task, such as writing documents and analyzing large volumes of data, more effectively when they were away from the distractions of the office, such as telephone calls, or conversations with colleagues. Some respondents working reduced hours reported increased energy levels and enthusiasm for work as a result of not being full-time. Kelliher and Anderson (2009) did not encounter much opposition to this intensification. Job insecurity has been cited as a reason why employees may accept intensification without resistance (Campbell, 2002). Another reason found by Kelliher and Gore (2006), which might apply to self-employed as well, is the believe in gaining some benefit as a consequence. In accordance to these findings, self-employed might experience work intensification but still feel satisfied with fulfilling personal goals in the work and life domains. How individuals do this and how they use resources and demands in order to fulfill their personal goals will be discussed in the next section.

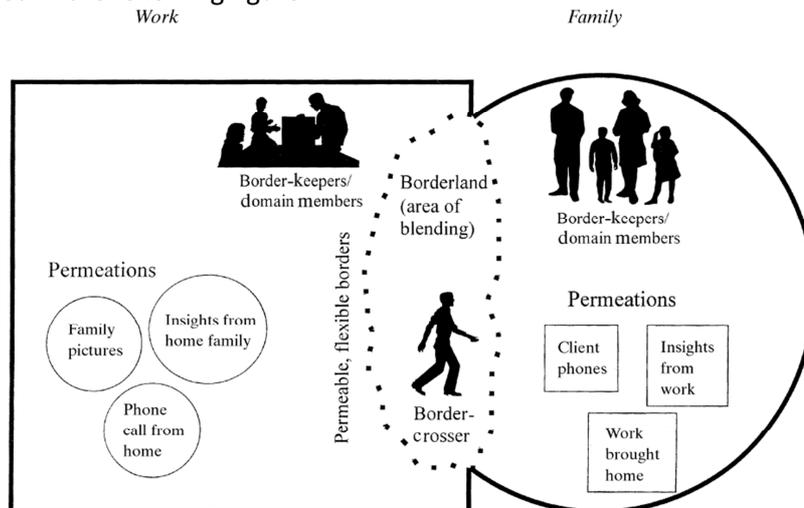
### 3.5. The work-family border theory

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Before the advent of industry and the growth of market economies, a large amount of production was done by families primarily for their own consumption. After the industrial revolution, work and family activities were carried out in different places, at different times, with different sets of people, and with different norms for behaviour and expressed emotions. Today most workplaces and homes have cultures and expectations distinct from each other.

Given their contrasting purposes and cultures, work and home are two different domains, to some extent shaped by the individual. The central idea of the border theory (Campbell Clark, 2000) is that these domains interact with each other to a degree, determined by the strength of the border between them. Individuals are crossing borders each time they go from one domain into the other. The concepts of the border theory, the work and home domains, the borders between work and home, the border-crosser, and the border-keepers will be discussed in this paragraph. Campbell Clark (2000)’s theory is based on research on organizational employees and focuses on the borders between work and ‘family’ (instead of ‘life’) and will be used as a framework to explore the experiences of self-employed women with their work-life balance. It provides insight in the variables influencing the work-life balance and therefore might be helpful in explaining different experiences of self-employed women. It is interesting to see whether (and to what extent) the theory is

applicable to self-employed workers. The conceptual model of the work-family border theory is visualized in the following figure:



**Figure 3: Campbell Clark's work-family border model (2000).**

### 3.5.1. Domains

Campbell Clark (2000) distinguishes the work and family domain, which both are associated with different cultures: rules, thought patterns, and behavior. She classifies the two domains by differences in valued goals and valued means. Individuals reported that work primarily satisfied the goals of providing an income and giving sense of accomplishment, while home life satisfied the goals of attaining close relations and personal happiness (Clark and Farmer, 1998). The means are described in terms of behavior. Clark and Farmer (Ibid.) found that 'responsible' and 'capable' were most important to reach desired goals at work, while 'loving' and 'giving' were the most important means at home.

Nippert-Eng (1996) describes the way individuals deal with the differences between domains as a continuum, ranging from 'integration' to 'segmentation'. If domains are integrated, there is no distinction between what belongs to home and what belongs to work. Segmented domains involve very different intellectual and emotional approaches. Because a balance is a subjective experience, it does not automatically involve an integrated approach. Balance comes with fulfilling the needs in the separate domains, by being able to use the specific means for the specific end.

Kossek and Lautsch (2008) define the way individuals manage relationships between work and home and the way they feel about living their life as a flex-style. The authors found that the type of work, type of family, gender, and occupation did not influence individual's flex-styles. What mattered most was how they felt about managing their work and life.

### 3.5.2. Borders

Individuals segment or integrate work and home by using borders; lines of demarcation between domains, defining the point at which domain-relevant behavior begins or ends (Campbell Clark, 2000). Borders have three main forms: physical, temporal, and psychological. The physical border, such as a wall, defines where domain-relevant behavior takes place. Temporal borders (set work hours), divide when work is done from when home responsibilities start. Psychological borders are rules created by individuals, dictating thinking patterns, behavior patterns, and emotions that are appropriate for each domain.

Borders are characterized by their permeability, flexibility, blending, and border strength. Permeability is the degree to which elements from other domains may enter (Hall & Richter, 1988). For example, borders are permeable if a woman works at home and is asked for something by a family member. This might be experienced positive (feeling at home) or negative (interrupted). Permeation might also be psychological, transferring positive or negative emotions and attitudes.

Flexibility refers to the extent to which a border may contract or expand, depending on the demands of one domain or the other (Hall and Richter, 1988). Women who are free to work any hours they choose have flexible temporal borders. Women with ideas, insights, and emotions flowing between work and home have flexible psychological borders. When borders are very permeable and flexible the work and home domain are blending. Campbell Clark suggests that a “borderland” is created; a place where domains overlap each other. It is questionable whether such a borderland actually exists. It might also be that individuals are in one domain, but are influenced by resources and demands from the other domain. This process of interaction is discussed in section 3.3.1.

If domains are very different, individuals may become confused about their identity and purpose in the borderland (Campbell Clark, 2000). However, when the work and home domains are similar, blending may lead to integration and a sense of wholeness. Border strength is determined by permeability, flexibility, and blending. A strong border is very impermeable, inflexible, and does not allow blending. Weak borders are the opposite: they allow permeations, are flexible, and allow blending. The ideal border strength is subjective. Self-employed women might appreciate weak borders because of being able to combine work with life, but might experience difficulties in time negotiating about when and where to work. Campbell Clark proposes that when domains are similar, weak borders facilitate a work-life balance. Unclear remains how domains can be compared and what ‘similar’ means in this context. Border strength might also differ between the two sides. For example, the work domain might be flexible in working hours, while the home domain is not flexible concerning children’s school times. Campbell Clark proposes that individuals experience greater work/life balance when the border of the domain they primarily identify with is strong, and weak for the other domain. It would be interesting to explore with which domains self-employed women identify themselves primarily, and how the borders can be described in terms of permeability and flexibility. Besides the borders, also the border-crossing individuals have attributes which contribute to a work-life balance. These will be discussed next.

### 3.5.3. Border crossers

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According to Clark Campbell (2000), the individual ability to adjust to work and home, which can be referred to as autonomy, is determined by an individual’s (self-created) influence and identification. Influence, that comes with competences, affiliation with the domain’s members, and the internalization of the domains culture and values, gives the border crosser power to negotiate about the domain and its borders. This means that the more influence a women has, the better she is able to adjust work and home. It provides her with more autonomy. The second attribute, identification, relates to the motivation to manage borders and domains. Identification is indicated by whether individuals find meaning in their responsibilities and if these match with their self-concept. Other researchers mainly used the term involvement, measured in time and energy. They found that high identification with both roles and trying to fill both roles at ones, results in conflict (Voydanoff, 2004). However, individuals might spend high amounts of time and energy within a domain without identifying with it. Apparently, it is the feeling of identification with domains which motivates to manage a balance. Domains are not only defined by individuals, but also by other domain members. The role of these members will be discussed next.

### 3.5.4. Domain members

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Domain creation and management is an interactive activity in which border-crossers and domain members negotiate what constitutes the domains and the borders between them. Members that are especially influential in defining the domains and borders are called border-keepers. In the home domain this can be spouses and for organizational employees this can be colleagues and managers. Self-employed, however, have different border keepers at work. Some self-employed have personnel, and others may have a partner, but a great part is solo self- employed. It would be interesting to explore how their work domain and border are defined. Disagreement about what constitutes a certain domain can be a primary source of work/life conflict when domain members

have to deal with incompatible demands. Campbell Clark (2000) found three strategies to deal with these conflicts, which will be discussed in the next paragraph.

### 3.5.5. Border management

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Besides negotiating about borders, borders have to be maintained in order to keep a work-life balance. This border management can be done by several strategies. Campbell Clark (2000) mentions three strategies. The first strategy is aimed at building understanding to create “other domain awareness”. In the home domain, friends and family might not be aware of the responsibilities of a self-employed woman at her work domain. If the partner or family member is working in the same business, other domain awareness is high. However, women working solo might feel not understood, because they have no domain members who participate in defining the domain and border. Domain awareness can be increased by communication obviously, but also by open houses where family and friends are invited to the workplace or coworkers to the house domain. The second strategy is to increase commitment of the domain members to the border crosser. Commitment shows when domain members support the border-crosser in other domain responsibilities. A family’s support in a women’s own business may help, or employees taking over a task when a woman has to take care of a child unexpected. The third strategy is to initiate communication between members in various domains. Individuals living in two very different worlds may find it difficult to talk with people in one world about what is going on in the other world.

Myrie and Daly (2009) explored the ways in which self-employed create and manage boundaries between work and the family. They found that participants used time, space, (symbolic) physical objects, routines and rules. First, temporal boundaries were sustained primarily by the practice of blocking specific time periods for work and family activities. Schedules were often dictated by external circumstances; such as, client needs or academic calendars. Temporal boundaries were often blurred because during personal and family emergencies, most participants said that family demands took precedence over work. Furthermore, most self-employed are multitasking across the two domains, performing work-related and family-related activities simultaneously. Second, spatial boundaries were largely determined by the location of the office and whether the work space was dedicated or shared. Dedicated space was often accompanied by a strong association with the area for work only. Third, physical objects are an important aspect of boundary creation and maintenance. These objects can be doors and room dividers, which help to mute sounds and provide a sense of privacy and safety, signs to advise or remind clients to use specific entrances or areas, of office equipment, supplies, furniture, and objects that create the ambiance self-employed like to work in. Fourth, mental and physical routines can be used to accomplish the transition from one domain to another, for example preparing the work area, cleaning, etc. Fifth, rules were also used to create and reinforce the boundaries between work and family. Rules for the participants themselves and their family members related to availability and access, the use of work space, equipment and supplies, the presence of family members and regulation of environmental factors; such as sounds and smells. Rules for clients specified their responsibilities and governed their behavior while present in the home-based working environment. Participants also created rules for relatives, friends, acquaintances, neighbors, and other professionals. These rules were related mainly to the participant’s availability for social and professional interactions.

In the last paragraph of this theoretical framework, the main implications of this literature study for the current researched are discussed. Furthermore, a conceptual model is constructed which includes the three theories which might be helpful in exploring women’s work-life balance experiences.

### 3.6. From theory to empiricism

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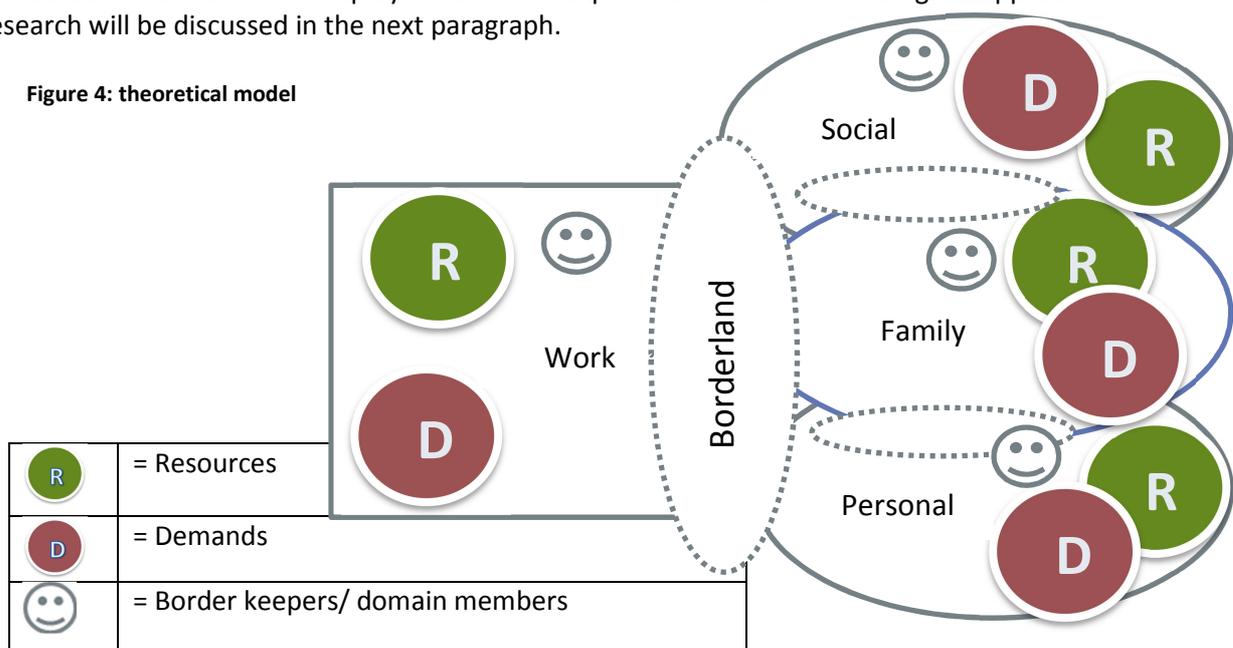
The results from the literature study presented in the former paragraphs will be the starting point of the current research. It shows a number of important points to take into account in the current study.

First, since the central interest is in self-employed women’s experiences, it is important to define a work-life balance as a subjective concept. A work-life balance is an often used term, with many different connotations and measures. Therefore, the meaning of a balance is explicitly mentioned during the interviews as satisfaction with fulfilling personal goals in the work and other life domains.

Second, related to this point, Languilaire’s (2009) division of the work, family, social, and personal life domains, is used to conceptualize “life”. In this way, women could describe their personal goals and priorities. Third, theories on the work-life balance are mainly based on experiences of organizational employed. This means that concepts had to be “translated” and adjusted so they would be applicable to self-employed women’s situation. At the same time, there was left enough space for women to share their experience in their own words. Fourth, Voydanoff (2004)’s theory of resources and demands was used to select women. Based at the within work domain resources and demands, differences in experiences among women are expected. Especially the type of business, type of self-employment, location of the office, and years of experience might cause variation in experiences. Because the main interest was in explaining experiences from an organizational sociological perspective, the focus is on the influence of organizational context factors. All women had a family domain, which implies that all women had a spouse, were living together, and had at least one child younger than 12 years. I took into consideration that these factors might have been of influence on self-employed women’s work-life balance and discussed family topics in the interviews. Fifth and finally, the influence of (organizational) factors on work-life balance is difficult to isolate. Especially in the experience of self-employed, work and life are often interwoven with each other. Therefore, very specific questions were posed and the definition of a balance as satisfaction with life goals instead of measuring the time and energy spend at work or home was often repeated.

In this research, the experiences of self-employed women will be of central interest, providing more in-depth knowledge. First, the definition of work-life balance will be expanded by describing the work, family, social, and personal life domains (Languilaire, 2009). Second, Voydanoff’s (2004) theory of resources and demands will be used to explore which factors hinder and enhance women’s work-life balance. Third, the field of tension between autonomy and responsibilities will be explored. Fourth, Campbell Clark (2000)’s border theory will be used to understand how women use their resources and handle demands. The border theory provides insight in how women manage and try to fulfill personal goals in all life domains. The theories are used to explore differences in experiences, seen from an organizational sociological perspective. In the following model the theories are combined to research self-employed women’s experiences. The methodological approach for this research will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Figure 4: theoretical model



## 4. Methods

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After having discussed the aim of this research, this paragraph will provide information about the research design and methods.

### 4.1. Type of research

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In order to answer the main question of this research, “*How do Dutch self-employed women experience their work-life balance and how can differences in experiences be explained from an organizational sociological perspective?*”, an explorative qualitative interview research was conducted. The five sub questions are answered based on the literature study and interviews with 24 self-employed women. Existing concepts and theories from literature were used to generate topics for the interviews. However, self-employed women were asked to give their own vision, experiences, and judgements about their work-life balance as well. The explorative character of the research gave space to the meaning giving by these women and other important factors were allowed to come up in the interviews.

### 4.2. Operationalization of important concepts

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In this research *work-life balance* is defined as “satisfaction with fulfilling the personal ends in both the work and life domain, by being able to use appropriate means” (Campbell Clark, 2000:751). In other definitions with the notion of balance as a perception or socially constructed meaning, various terms for “personal ends” are used. In this research, “personal ends”, which means intended results, is replaced for “personal goals” because of clarity. Other terms that are often used are priorities, objectives, or purposes in life. Personal goals were operationalized by asking women what they found important in their work, family, social, and personal life, what they aimed for in life, and whether they were satisfied with that. An overview of all terms and definitions used in this research is included in the glossary.

During the interviews it was emphasized that a balance was not about time or energy spend on work and life domains, but about satisfaction with goal fulfillment in work and life. The life domains were operationalized by distinguishing between family, social, and personal life (Languilaire, 2009).

The term “appropriate means” in Campbell Clark’s definition (2000) was operationalized by asking women which resources helped them in fulfilling goals. In a control question women were asked for perceived importance of skills, persons, systems, and devices. Furthermore, not only resources were discussed, but also demands which might hinder satisfaction. After women were questioned about the difficulties they encountered in fulfilling life goals, they were asked about their work load and expectations of themselves and relatives.

In order to investigate the way women manage borders between work and various life domain, concepts from Campbell Clark (2000)’s border theory, such as domains, borders, border crossing, and domain members were discussed. Furthermore, women were requested to fill in a self-assessment test from the book “CEO of me” (Kossek and Lautsch, 2008) to identify their flex-style. Although this study is about understanding self-employed women’s experiences and balance is defined as a process, it is interesting to see whether overall impressions from the interviews are coherent with women’s own work-life perspective.

### 4.3. Data collection

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In this section the method of collecting data will be discussed.

#### 4.3.1. Research participants

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In this study a maximum variation sampling method is used. The main interest is in experiences of self-employed working in various situations. Therefore, 24 women were selected varying on sector,

type of self-employment, location of the office, years being self-employed, and being breadwinner or not (see Appendices A). In order to be able to understand the influence of the work situation on women's work-life experiences, the women's home situation is kept as constant as possible. All self-employed women participating in this study lived together or were married, had a working partner, and at least one child younger than 12 years. Although also others (self-employed) might struggle with maintaining a work-life balance, women under these conditions all have to combine paid work with care for children.

24 women in four sectors were selected: women working in training and development, women working in business service, women working in commercial service, and women working in health care. These sectors were chosen because data shows these sectors are most popular among Dutch self-employed women (Dutch Chamber of Commerce, 2010). The women working in training and development, who mainly trained other women on personal development and work-life balance, and women working in business services responded on a call for participation which was placed on an online platform for self-employed women. This network contains at least 1000 women. The women working in health care, who had irregular working hours, responded on an online call via professional associations on LinkedIn. The women working in commercial service owned a shop, a fitness club, or a restaurant with regular opening hours, which might influence their work-life balance. They were more difficult to reach and were recruited by the snowball method.

A priori six women were selected to interview first: a solo self-employed, a small employer, and a business partner, either working inside the home or outside the home, varying in sector and years being self-employed. After interviewing these six women, other women were selected within the four sectors. Fourteen of them worked at home, while ten had an office at another location. Fourteen women in the sample were breadwinners; ten had a spouse who earned a similar or higher income. Nine women were solo self-employed, nine had a business partner, three worked within a business venture, and three of them were self-employed with personnel. The women's years of being self-employed ranges from one to nineteen years (see Appendices A).

#### 4.3.2. Time and location

The interviews took place at women's offices, homes, or at a neutral meeting point, spread around the Netherlands. These interviews took about one hour and half. The total research period ranged from September 13<sup>th</sup> 2010 until June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011. The data collection took place from January to March 2011.

#### 4.3.3. Research instrument

The interviews were conducted by using a topic list. The questions in the interviews were mainly determined by concepts and theories from literature. Women were first asked to describe their life domains (work, family, social, and personal) as narrated by Languilaire (2009). Second, the definition of work-life balance as "satisfaction with fulfilling the personal goals in both the work and life domain, by being able to use appropriate means" (Campbell Clark, 2000:751) was explained. Women were asked how conscious they were about their balance and how they experienced this process. Third, women were asked how autonomous they felt in work and what helped them to balance (resources) and which restrictions they encounter (demands). The topic list is included in appendices B. By conducting explorative interviews it was possible to elaborate on the opinions and experiences of respondents concerning various topics. In this way, unexpected variables that influenced self-employed women's work-life balance experiences could be detected.

#### 4.4. Adjustments to the initial research plan

In order to conveniently structure the research results, two initial sub questions from the research plan were altered. The questions 'Which work conditions influence the work-life balance of self-employed women?' and 'Which life conditions influence the work-life balance of self-employed women?' were respectively changed into: "Which resources enhance self-employed women's work-life balance?" and "Which demands hinder self-employed women in finding a work-life balance?".

The results show that not the organizational characteristics and women's home situations itself influence their balance, but that they provide resources and demands. These resources and demands influence self-employed women's experiences with their work-life balance.

#### 4.5. Data analysis

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All interviews were recorded with an audio tape recorder and transcribed. The data were coded by using the program MAXqda2007. This method was suited to systematically analyze different experiences of women concerning various aspects of their work-life balance. After having selected important fragments from the first six interviews to answer the research question, clusters of related fragments were created and coded. The code tree, which is written in Dutch, is included in appendices C. The descriptive questions about domains, resources, and demands were relatively easy to label. However, women were often not aware of how they maintained a work-life balance. They responded to a feeling, which made it difficult for them to consistently describe this process. Autonomy appeared to be a useful concept to understand women's success in meeting various role demands. In the last ten interviews this was verified by asking women about their awareness and influence on defining and fulfilling one's goals. In the last interviews, we found no additional factors explaining differences in experiences. This means the saturation point was reached, so we could end the process of data collection (Boeije, 2005). The data is interpreted and concisely described per topic. In illustration of women's experiences anonymous quotes of research participants are incorporated in the text.

#### 4.6. Reliability and validity

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In this research, attention was paid to internal and external reliability and – validity. The internal reliability was warranted during several stages of the research. First, respondents were selected on certain features: they lived together or were married, had a working spouse, and at least one child younger than 12. The procedures of selecting respondents are thoroughly described in section 4.3.1. Secondly, existing concepts, such as *work-life balance* and *autonomy*, were used whenever possible. By operationalizing these concepts in section 4.2., the current research can be repeated which will result in comparable findings. It would have been desirable to cooperate with other researchers in operationalizing concepts. Thirdly, the interviews were conducted by using topic lists and taped with a voice recorder. During the interviews, the exact content was not predetermined to create space for women's own stories and experiences. Detailed information enhanced the conciseness and reliability of the results. Finally, the data-analysis is done in a consistent way, by transcribing all interviews and coding them with the program MaxQDA as discussed in section 4.5. The external reliability of this research is warranted by the possibility provided to repeat this research under comparable conditions. This possibility is enabled by an accurate description of the research methods.

The internal validity of this research is warranted by the attention paid to the selection of participants, the development of the research instrument, and the analysis of the results. The selection of participants is described in paragraph 4.3. The research instrument was created beforehand by extensively reading existing research. The topic interviews were pretested, to be sure that the questions would be interpreted as they were meant to be. Respondents were told that the results would be processed anonymously beforehand. The program of MaxQDA contributed to the result analysis and internal validity by facilitating the use of code trees and retrieving fragments.

The external validity is the extent to which the results are generalizable to a broader population (Boeije, 2010). In this research, only women who lived together or were married, had a working partner, and at least one child younger than 12 were interviewed. Since these criteria were based on data of the CBS (2010) and existing literature, these women are representative for Dutch self-employed women. Presumably, women will have different experiences balancing between work and life than men do because of other priorities in work and life domains. Traditional role patterns of the man being the breadwinner and the women taking care of the family are still valid in most

families (Lucier-Greer and Adler-Bader, 2011). Furthermore, women and men have different beliefs about their ability to define and fulfil personal goals. Women often base their identity on being a mother and wife, which holds them back in fulfilling personal in the work domain. Men base their identity on their career or the amount or the amount of money they earn. For them it can be difficult to fulfil personal goals in other life domains (Adams and Lenz, 2010). However, since the number of dual earner couples is rising, men are increasingly taking care of the household and children. It could be that in the near future men and women's experiences therefore become more similar.

Since this is an explorative study, the results are generalizable by conditions. They provide in-depth information about whether certain findings or patterns are related to specific situations and under what conditions. In order to expand the generalizability and to draw externally valid conclusions, hypotheses are formulated which should be quantitatively tested on a larger population.

## 5. Results and analysis

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In this chapter the results of the interviews will be presented and analyzed per sub question. All five sections start with a presentation of the results, which are illustrated with anonymous quotes of the respondents. The sections end with a conclusion, answering the sub question. The main question “How do Dutch self-employed women experience their work-life balance and how can differences in experiences be explained from an organizational sociological perspective?” will be answered in chapter 6.

### 5.1. “What constitutes the domains of work and life according to self-employed women?”

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According to Languilaire (2009) individuals are social agents who negotiate and share their life priorities with others in their environment. This research shows that self-employed working in the same sector largely work under comparable conditions and experience similar role demands. Therefore, we will first describe the work domain per sector (training and development, commercial service, business service, and health care). Second, the life domains women are engaged in will be explored. This section is concluded with an analysis of the constitution of women’s work, family, social, and personal domains.

#### 5.1.1. The work domain

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##### *Training and development*

Women working in this sector who were interviewed trained and coached individuals on personal development. Some had a specific group they target, such as mothers looking for balance between work and private life. All women in the training and development sector had an office at home. Some women worked solo and used this space to welcome clients. Others worked together with a business partner, employed personnel, or other self-employed and used external locations for their training and coaching sessions. The former worked three days a week, while the latter were breadwinners at home and worked fulltime. Women in training and development were mainly looking for self-development in and through their jobs. Furthermore, for women in training and development discovering personal goals is part of their job; they advise others to define their life goals. They want to “practice what they preach” and spend a lot of time on self-development besides and during work time. They attend workshops or hire a coach themselves for example.

##### *Commercial service*

The women working in this sector were owners of a clothing shop, a beauty salon, a fitness club, a yoga school, a cafe restaurant, and a restaurant chain. Their workplace was outside their homes. Two of them lived next to their business. All women in commercial service had employed personnel. Four of them worked together with a business partner, who was also their spouse in two cases. All women were or wanted to become breadwinner. All women worked fulltime or more, but the two women with a fitness club and a yoga school did not earn enough money to provide for the main income. The women in business service aimed for success in their work; they were mainly focused on results, power, challenges, and financial rewards. *“I enjoy seeing my business flourish. I like to work, but as an entrepreneur I take a lot of risks. I have 60 employed personnel, who all want to earn enough to buy bread and cheese. I know I’m responsible for that. But, I’m not unsatisfied about my salary.”* (10, commercial service).

##### *Business service*

Women in business service ran a collection agency, a recruitment agency, or offer secretary services, text writing, tax consultancy, or facilitated an online network. Half of them had an office outside the home and worked together with a business partner, employed personnel or operated in a business venture. They were all breadwinners. The other half worked solo, at home and was no breadwinner.

Two of them worked part-time. Women working in business service were comparable to women working in training and development concerning their goals. Self-development was most important to them.

### *Health care*

Women working in this sector had various functions, such as a midwife, a maternity nurse, speech therapist, a women in specialized childcare, psychiatry, and a general practitioner. All women worked with clients at their homes or at a doctor's practice. Half of these women's practices were located next to their homes. The midwife and general practitioner worked in a business venture, the psychiatrist had one business partner. All women in this sector worked fulltime and four of them were breadwinner. The maternity nurse and speech therapist did not earn enough money as a main income. Women in health care had different goals in their work as the other women in this study. They mainly wanted to take care of others: *"If a woman is in need, in a delivery, someone needs to go. And if they call me and say the need is high, I don't turn them down. That is the mother Theresa inside me. (CK, health care).*

### 5.1.2. Life domains

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During the interviews women's family, social, and personal life were discussed. Some women felt resistant in answering these questions, because they did not experience their life as being compartmentalized. However, they could answer the questions referring to the family, social, and personal life.

### *Family life*

All women participating in this study were self-employed, living together or married, and had at least one child younger than 12 years. In almost all cases the partner had a fulltime job with flexible work hours, either being self or organizationally employed. The partner often took care of the children one day way a week. The other days the child was taken care of by the women themselves, family, a babysitter, or daycare. Because of taking care of the children during the week, working couples often worked during the evenings and some also during the weekends for a few hours.

The care children need is depended on their age. Children younger than four years are still very dependent on their mothers and need physical help. When children go to school, they are being taken care of for a great part a day. However, women working at home often want to accompany their children to and from school and eat together in the lunch breaks. This takes a lot of time and restrains their effective working hours. Elder children need more emotional and pedagogic support. Furthermore, they are more active in playing with others and sports: *"There's a lot of hustle around those kids. Bringing and taking them everywhere... And at the hockey club some mothers came up with the idea that every week someone needs to bake something. I find that nonsense. For me it's simple, I just go to the bakery for three cakes. Then it's done."(AS, training and development).*

The spouse was hardly involved in the household, which was mainly done by women themselves. Full time working women were often supported by a housekeeper every two weeks. Almost all women were satisfied with their family life. What they found most important was providing security for their children. They wanted their children to grow up in a safe, open and honest environment. Attention for each other, atmosphere, being "happy together", respect, and sharing were important values for all women. Women in business service and in health care found it also important that their family life was structured. They found it important that their children would grow up in stress-free surroundings, with their parents being there for them at home. *"I don't schedule our quality time, it just occurs. But we always have dinner together. That is the time to look at each other and discuss what needs to be discussed. Than we share how we feel, if there are any irritations or arguments going on. I love that and spend a lot of time on it. Dinner, for us that is the moment to connect with each other. Eating in front of the television never happens here!" (JW, training and development).*

Women's "family domain" did not include the extended family, although the grandparents often took care of their children. Most women did not experience their extended family as an important or separate life domain. Sometimes extended family even felt like a burden, for example when women felt obliged to visit or to take care of their parents. *"My parents, they are a separate part of my life, they live far from here. It sometimes feels like my duty to visit them. If they would live closer nearby I could come by and have a coffee with them. Now I have to schedule it, I think by myself 'O, I also need to visit my parents again..'. They don't understand the things I'm occupied with, that's why I don't tell them everything. They are both 85 years old. But I'm happy they are still healthy and independent". (LK, training and development).*

### *Social life*

All women indicated that if they had more time left, they would spend it at their social life. Although they valued a social life, they compromised at it after becoming self-employed and mother. Most women had a few good friends, which they considered important to "recharge their batteries". They often knew their friends for a long time and were very close. They felt they could express themselves and "be themselves" again: *"I thought a social life wouldn't be that important to me anymore, but you absolutely need it. It's the old me who's able to manifest herself again. The me who I was before I was a mother, and without the responsibilities of having my own business. It feels like freedom when I'm with friends!" (GD, training and development).*

Besides freedom, women are also able to relax with friends. For women in commercial service, enjoying themselves is the most important value in social life. They just want to have a good time and enjoy life, being spontaneous. Women in training and development and in business service appreciate their friends because they are able to reflect on their jobs together, share and exchange experiences, and providing each other with new insights. For women in health care, quality time is very important. They want to connect deeply, and at the same time respecting each other's freedom.

In contradiction as in family life, women do plan "quality time" with their friends. This is mainly on a Friday evening, when they don't have to work and have also no family-responsibilities. Some women take time off during the day and meet with friends who are also self-employed or have no job. Others meet in the weekends, sometimes together with their spouses and children. Almost all women are unsatisfied with the frequency they are meeting with friends but also find it difficult to improve this, since "everyone is busy".

### *Personal life*

Almost all women associated a personal life with "rest". Women working in commercial service often had no time for a personal life. Women in training and development's personal life were mainly about constantly self-developing, often through their work: *"I want to be occupied with new things, knowing what's happening around me, keep developing. While working I keep track of things and I discover a lot. My job is my personal development. Considering that, work and private life are really integrated" (AS, training and development).*

Also women working in business service indicated that their work was their personal development, and the only thing they considered as their personal life. Women in health care were interested in finding a deeper meaning in their life. They spend more time on going inwards, to feel how to deal with experiences and which choices to make. Women working in health care associated their personal domain also with taking care of their own bodies.

Most women did not reserve personal time. However, women working in training and development considered their work-related sessions and training weeks as personal developments, which they had to book in front. Other women created personal time when they needed it or when they had nothing to do. *"I take time for myself whenever it's possible. But maybe I steer on it a little when I feel I need it. The dog is my best excuse to go out alone." (MF, business service).*

### 5.1.3. Conclusion

The results presented in this paragraph stress the importance of maintaining a subjective definition of a work-life balance and distinguishing between self-employed instead of considering them as one group, since the importance and contents of life domains differ among them. The personal goals of the self-employed women in this study are summarized in the following table:

**Table 1: Personal goals in work, family, social, and personal life per sector.**

	<b>Work</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Social</b>	<b>Personal</b>
<b>Training and development</b>	Self-development	Security	Support / inspiration	Self-development
<b>Commercial service</b>	Success	Security	Support/ relaxation	Relaxation
<b>Business service</b>	Self-development	Security/ structure	Support/ inspiration	Self-development
<b>Health care</b>	Human orientated	Security/ structure	Support/ relaxation	Inspiration

In the table, general terms are used to describe women's experiences in order to be able to compare them across women working in different sectors. Looking at similarities first, all women in this study found security important in their family life, which refers to safety for their children, taking care of each other, faith, openness, no stress, and stability. In the social life domain, support was most important to them. Support was also referred to as unconditional love, a safety net or as a sounding board. Furthermore, from an organizational sociological perspective one might notice that self-employed women's goals in life domains are reflected in their jobs.

Analyzing women's personal goals per sector, women working in training and development and women working in business service are looking for self-development in their personal domain as well as in their work domain. Most women working in these sectors found inspiration in their social life. They enjoyed in depth conversations and reflection with friends on things they encountered in work and daily life. Especially women working in training and development used insights from their social life in their work coaching others. This is referred to as a positive spillover from the life to the work domain (Voydanoff, 2004).

Women in commercial service spend little time on their personal and social life, as their main aim was to find security and success in life, by which they meant high financial rewards and achievements to be proud of. In order to achieve this, they worked hard. Women in commercial service preferred their time left to spend on relaxation.

For women in health care human connection is very important. They established a connection with themselves and their feelings in their personal time, which provided them with inspiration. Being grounded, they were better able to take care of others in their work, but also to relax more in their social life. For some women it was difficult to maintain a social life because of irregular working hours. They could not rely on friends for support or inspiration, because social time was limited or spend with more persons at the same time. For this reason, they valued taking a bath, meditation, or making a walk by themselves in their personal domain. Women in health care often felt as one person with different roles and tasks, only maintaining a different (professional) attitude. Because they act on their feelings and intuition, they feel similar in work and in other life domains.

Although Languilaire's (2009) division of life domains in family, social, personal life was useful in discovering women's life goals, self-employed women did not experience their life as compartmentalized in various domains. For them, work is an extension of their personalities. This is different from organizational employed, who have to adapt to the organization's culture, including rules, thought patterns, and behaviour (Campbell Clark, 2000). The effects of having similar goals in work and life domains on self-employed women's work-life balance experiences will be discussed in the next paragraph.

## 5.2. “How do self-employed women experience their work-life balance?”

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A work-life balance is an often used concept in popular media without a clear definition. Therefore, the definition was made explicit during the interviews and balance was described as ‘satisfaction with fulfilling the personal goals in both the work and life domain’ (Campbell Clark, 2000:751). Maintaining this definition, awareness of one’s personal goals appeared to be a prerequisite for finding a balance. The results show that women’s awareness and satisfaction vary per sector. Also life events may increase women’s awareness of their personal goals.

### 5.2.1. Awareness and satisfaction

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#### *Training and development*

Women working in training and development were the most satisfied with their work-life balance compared to the women in this study working in other sectors. Women in training and development were very aware of their own work-life balance. They used training and coaching’s techniques, such as taking a look at their life from an observer perspective, and writing down their goals in work and private life by creating a vision board, making a wish list, and defining targets such as a minimum of three visits to the theatre. The women in training and development also reflected systematically on how they spend their energy during and at the end of the day: *“I’m continuously aware of how I feel. If I don’t feel well, I look for the cause. I check whether I still work in accordance with my goal”* (JW, training and development).

#### *Commercial service*

In general, the women in commercial service were the least satisfied with their work-life balance. Women in commercial service were less aware of how they managed work and private role demands. They were mainly reacting instead of acting: *“If I don’t have feelings of guilt, then it’s ok. If I’m already gone when my children are waking up and come back after they went to bed for a few weeks, then I feel guilty. When I feel guilty enough, then I know it’s time to rebalance and make some choices”* (IO, commercial service).

#### *Business service*

According to women in business service, their work-life balance is satisfactory. Similar to women in training and development, women in business service were aware of their work-life balance. Their business is often a way for self-development. Women in business service often had a detailed business plan and clearly defined important values in private life. They use to-do lists and try to manage their time between work and private life as effective as possible. *“The more responsibilities I get, the more I plan. You have to, otherwise it will slip between your hands. That’s why I have a coach, I want to have it all settled. For me the beginning of a new year is a good moment, almost symbolic: a new year, a new plan. This year is vintage year. I’ve invested a lot of time, energy, and money. But also personal I invested a lot, so I have to know what I get back. I want to become breadwinner of our family, so my spouse can become self-employed as well. That’s what he wants. And we want to live somewhere at the countryside, not in this vinex area. (...). I like to make it visual, also concerning my time. I’m always planning, that’s what we do in our job as well”*. (HG, Business service).

#### *Health care*

Women working in health care were relatively highly satisfied with their work-life balance. Women in health care appeared to be sensitive to their work-life balance. The difference with reacting is that women in health care were monitoring their feelings. This allowed them to act before they felt stressed out. Women in health care did not create strategies or write plans, but often took time to reflect on their balance. Furthermore, exchanging and sharing experiences with others, such as their partners or colleagues, helped them to find a balance. *“Then it goes like: what if we do this, how would it be? We create scenarios. If we do this, it would be like that for the children, do we want that? I don’t write our scenarios down. We talk about it once a month”*. (RB, health care).

### 5.2.2. Life events

Whether women have or have not defined personal goals in work and private life is also influenced by personal life events. It is remarkable that the women who define goals in work and life, all have experienced something which made them think about what they want to do in life. These experiences are life events such as a burn-out and health problems, a divorce or faced difficulties giving birth. It appears that especially the birth of a second child makes it more difficult to fulfill goals both in work and private life. The events mentioned are experienced by women as a turning point at which they are forced to prioritize and which made them think about their goals in work and private life. Especially at these points in life women feel off balance and they feel a need to rebalance.

### 5.2.3. Conclusion

Although the level of satisfaction is difficult to measure in a qualitative study, differences in work-life balance experiences are noticeable. The more aware women were of their personal goals, the higher their work-life balance satisfaction. Awareness of personal goals varied among sector, as is shown in the following table:

**Table 2: Awareness of personal goals per sector.**

	<b>Awareness of personal goals</b>
<b>Training and development</b>	Work and private life
<b>Commercial service</b>	Work or none
<b>Business service</b>	Work and private life
<b>Health care</b>	Work

The table shows that women in training and development and in business service were most aware of their personal goals. However, although women working in health care were mostly aware of their goals in work, they were satisfied with their work-life balance. This might be because women in health care experienced their life as least compartmentalized. Because their work is important and related to their personalities, they consider personal and work goals as being the same. The skills women used for defining their goals is one of the resources which enabled women to find a work-life balance, as will be discussed in the next paragraph.

## 5.3. “Which resources enhance self-employed women’s work-life balance?”

This section starts with discussing autonomy, which is often seen as the main resource enhancing self-employed women’s work-life balance. However, although autonomy is a crucial resource, it is not sufficient in itself. Other resources which appeared to be important to women and will be discussed next are social support, skills, and experience.

### 5.3.1. Autonomy

As work-life balance, autonomy is another often used term but difficult to pinpoint. In this section the meaning of autonomy and self-employed women’s experiences will be discussed. Subsequent to that, women’s degree of autonomy in their job, their work location, and working hours (respectively job, spatial, and time autonomy) are analyzed.

Almost all self-employed women in this study acknowledged that they are in charge of their own life. They felt responsible for the choices they made in work and private life, and accepted the outcomes as the result of those choices. According to self-employed women autonomy means freedom of choice: *“I’m the director of my life. Every moment I’m able to choose. Even if I let myself be influenced by others, it’s still my choice. Sometimes I’m aware of that when it happens, then I ask myself: do I really want this?”* (HB, health care).

This definition is in accordance with Benz and Frey (2003) who found that autonomy is appreciated because of being free in selecting and fulfilling tasks. Because self-employed determine their own tasks, work location, and hours, they are more likely to find a balance between work and life. The few women who did not feel autonomous, were also unsatisfied with their work-life balance. One woman said being autonomous as a self-employed is an illusion, because freedom of choice brings the pressure and responsibility of having to choose. Another woman tried to be autonomous in her life, but felt she had to follow her dominant business partner, who was also her spouse. She felt she tried but could not pursue her own goals in life because of the heavy workload.

In general, autonomy appeared to be an important motivation to become self-employed for the participants. Women in training and development mainly started their own business in order to gain more time autonomy or flexibility. They also experienced spatial autonomy, because they all had an office at home. Women in health care experienced mainly time autonomy being self-employed, because they did not experience the time pressure they would experience if they were organizationally employed. Because of this, they were able to spend more attention to their patients which gave them more job autonomy. For women in commercial service, job autonomy was the most important. Women in commercial service wanted to “live their dream” and be creative. Furthermore, they found it important to work independent. The latter was also the main motivation for women in business service. The degree of women’s job, spatial, and time autonomy is influenced by various factors, as will be discussed next.

### Job autonomy

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The freedom self-employed women experienced to work independently and select the tasks they find interesting is influenced by the sector, type of self-employed, and societal developments.

#### Sector

Women working in the same sector had comparable work-life balance experiences because of comparable work conditions. Although women choose for a business in which they could live out their personal goals, the sector they work in influenced their job autonomy. For women working in training and development this was mainly positive. They were reminded of the importance of reflecting on their feelings, by which they remained conscious of their own balance.

For women in business service the relation with clients was important. Their job autonomy was restricted because they had to deal with expectations, specific wishes, and deadlines of clients: *“I find it difficult that my clients are women. They always say “Yes, but...”. Count how many times women say “yes, but...”, you’ll be astonished at it. There’s always something that needs to be changed. Last minute, of course.” (HG, business service).*

The job autonomy of women in health care was restricted because of their job related responsibilities. They worked with human beings, whose wellbeing is their main priority: *“You don’t say: “Ok, it’s done, I go home, then I will be at home in time for dinner”. No, you stay. Eventually, when the child is born, it gives me so much energy that it was all worth it, but at the moment itself... But that’s what it is. In health care you work with human beings, you can’t walk out whenever you want”. (RB, health care).*

#### Type of self-employed

A third of the women we interviewed were solo-worker, mainly working as a coach or in health care. Solo-workers often work at home and are not breadwinners. They choose to work solo because they want to be autonomous in their tasks. The downside of working solo according to women is not being able to discuss and review their work with others. They sometimes feel limited in their work when they feel insecure about a certain project or decision to make.

Women in a business venture experience autonomy in their job because they are able to change working schedules and to discuss important issues. *“We discuss how we manage at home, and at work. We talk about it, give examples. And two colleagues have no family, that’s nice, they can always change schedules”*. (RB, health care).

A third of the women had personnel. These women felt in charge of their business; they were “the boss”. Women needed personnel in order to expand their business. However, employing personnel brings a lot of responsibilities along. Women with personnel felt that they needed to “pull the chart”, inspire others, and take care of the atmosphere and relationships on the work floor. Personnel often hold certain expectations concerning the job contents, which feel restraining. Some women worked with other self-employed instead, because they are more intrinsically motivated to work hard.

### Spatial autonomy

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Overall, women were satisfied with their ability to choose a work location. Self-employed with personnel, a partner, or a business venture mainly worked outside the home, whereas solo self-employed worked at home. The spatial autonomy of women with personnel was limited because they often needed more space to provide accommodation for their personnel. Many self-employed women did have an office at home, but preferred to work at the kitchen table. Some working at home experienced it as hard to not get distracted by their surroundings at home, for example when the children wanted attention or other tasks needed to be done. Their spatial autonomy was sometimes limited by their financial situation or childcare. Most women experienced it as practical to be able to do household tasks in between. Furthermore, they felt comfortable in their own environment. *“I love being able to drink my own coffee. Wherever I am, I always disgust the coffee. And another plus: I don’t have to tell about my weekend on Monday morning, wonderful!”*. (LK, coach).

Women in commercial service all had an office or store outside their homes. Their spatial autonomy was limited by the type of business they managed. However, women in commercial service experienced the separate location as positive, because they liked to separate work and private life. The only negative aspect they mentioned was the travel time. They tried to keep this as short as possible, as they experienced this as “a waste of time”. For women in business service no travel time is the main motivation to work from home, although they find that an office outside the home would provide a more professional appearance. Women in health care mainly work outside, helping patients at home or at a doctor’s practice. They don’t take any work home at all, which helps them in separating work from private life.

Summarizing from an organizational sociological perspective, spatial autonomy or the freedom to choose where to work, is influenced by the type of self-employed, women’s economic situation, and the relation to clients. Women with personnel, a partner, or a business venture experienced a limited spatial autonomy because of the space needed. The ability of women working at home to choose where to work was influenced by their financial situation or childcare possibilities. Women working in commercial service and health care’s spatial autonomy were influenced by the relation with their clients. Women working in commercial service needed to be accessible to clients, women working in health care often visited their clients at home. However, almost all women were satisfied with their degree of spatial autonomy. Some experienced it as beneficial to their balance to be able to combine work and household tasks, while others felt more satisfied when they are able to focus at one domain at a time.

### Time autonomy

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The ability to choose when to work can also be referred to as flexibility. According to women flexibility, or time autonomy, was necessary in order to combine various life domains. Women’s time autonomy appeared to be influenced by the sector, type of self-employed, location of the office, and being breadwinner or not.

## Sector

Women in commercial service all ran businesses with set working hours. However, they did not experience these as restrictive to their own time autonomy. They all have personnel, which allowed them to choose their own working hours. Because they have no intensive or personal relationship with their clients, they are able to close their stores for a holiday for example. Women in health care felt less autonomous because their working hours are irregular. Sometimes it is difficult to go to a birthday party during the weekends or to make an appointment on the long run, because they do not know whether they have to work. The limited time autonomy also affected their family domain: *“Everyone in this family needs to be flexible, that is how I raised my children. A lot is possible, but I expect something back for that as well. That means being flexible to me. When I have to work many hours for a week, my daughters clean the house, that is just normal to us. When they were 10, I learned them to iron. I don’t want them to be unable to wear the clothes they like, no, then you just iron yourself”*. (CK, health care).

Women in training and development and in business service experienced the most time autonomy, because they were best able to plan their appointments. However, sometimes they felt limited in their time autonomy because of (last-minute) expectations of clients. Women in training and development experienced seasonal effects. They had no training and coaching sessions during the summer and in holiday periods. Women in health care had more work during these periods as a substitute.

## Type of self-employed

Solo-workers often choose to work independently because their main motivation was to be flexible in their working hours. In this way they are able to combine their work with taking care of their children, which is important to them. Women with a business partner also experience time autonomy, because they work independently most of the time. However, most partners found it difficult to meet each other regularly, because of different time schedules. *“We try to meet here, at her place, or somewhere in the middle at a certain meeting point. We also stay in contact by phone, Skype, and email. But to connect it’s also important to see each other face to face. When we’re both busy, we tend to work separately. She does her training sessions and I do mine. We have to plan and reserve time, because when we don’t, we cannot support each other as much as we intended to”* (IS, training and development).

Self-employed with personnel often experienced that their employees were not flexible and interrupted during private life, which limited their time autonomy. *“I find it annoying when someone calls me in private time about work. Sometimes it happens, when they got my private number somewhere. When they call me at home, they really enter my private area. Some people just don’t understand that I need to change my mindset then. They force me to think about work when I don’t want to”*. (CS, commercial service).

Some women choose to work with other self-employed because they are more flexible that way. The women working in a business venture experienced less time autonomy, because they had to work together more often. In comparing to working for an organization they felt autonomous, because they were now better able to change schedules and therefore were more flexible.

## Location of the office

Most women working at home experienced great time autonomy because they were able to do household tasks in between their work tasks and they had no travel time. However, women working outside the home experienced working more efficiently, because they weren’t distracted by things in the house. *“You constantly have to make choices. It’s not like I wake up, go to my pigeon hole, do my work, and finish at five. There is a constant thinking process going on. Sometimes it gets too much,*

*but sometimes it's practical. It's easier to combine, but it never stops, you're busy all the time". (IS, working at home, training and development).*

All women in this study lived nearby their work, and did not experience the distance to their work as limiting their time autonomy. Women in health care maintained a maximum travel time of twenty minutes for example. *"In case of a delivery, you need to be there within an hour. I find that quite long. For care, I don't travel more than 20 minutes. Otherwise it's not worth the effort. Sometimes there are emergencies, then you want to be there quickly" (CK, health care).*

### 5.3.2. Social support

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Almost all women say they "can't do it without the support of my spouse". This support is emotional, but also practical. In almost all cases the spouse had a fulltime job with flexible work hours, either being self or organizationally employed. The spouse often had flexible work hours and was able to take care of the children if necessary. Because of taking care of the children during normal working hours, working couples often work during the evenings and some also during the weekends for a few hours. The spouse often took care of the children one day a week. The other days are taken care of by the women themselves, family, a babysitter, or daycare. Some women feel restrained because, although they have support, they still feel responsible for the household: *"My spouse prepares dinner ones a week. That's already a big thing for someone who has always lived under mother's wings. It works better when he is at home alone, otherwise he thinks "she'll do it". Before, I used to write a note: "tonight I want to eat this, here are the ingredients". Now I don't do that anymore, he can sort it out himself. Often it's spaghetti, and we have a big freezer..." (MF, business service).*

Many women mention that it became significantly more difficult to balance between work and life after the birth of their second child. The care children need depends on their age. Children younger than four years are still very dependent on their mothers and need physical help. When children go to school, they are being taken care of for a great part a day. However, women working at home often want to accompany their children to and from school and eat together in the lunch breaks. This takes a lot of time and restrains their effective working hours. Elder children need more emotional and pedagogic support. Friends and family provide a great deal of emotional support. Women said they could "recharge" and "be themselves" with friends. They also felt shortcoming towards their friends because they spend too much time at work and family at cost of their friends.

Lastly, women also receive support from their business partners. These women said they appreciate it when they give each other feedback, keep each other sharp and focused, stable, and inspired. They dare more together and share responsibilities, which gives them a feeling of autonomy. *"We inspire and support each other. If one of us has difficulties with work or in private life we understand and support each other. It's coming back all the time; this is why we do it. That's where we get or energy from." (RB, health care).*

For most women the relation with their partner is businesslike. The partner often has other character traits by which they are complementing each other in business, but don't feel attracted in private life. Of course this does not apply for women who work with their spouse. They feel connected in work and private life, which makes their business successful. However, all women working together with their spouse are struggling with their work life balance, as they find that their work is dominant to their private life. *"My spouse was mainly focused on the business, which made me feel I was alone. I did not have the feeling we were running a family together... we were running a business. (LA, commercial service).*

Women who work solo often go to network meetings or using social media such as Twitter and LinkedIn to stay in touch with others.

### 5.3.3. Skills

According to Campbell Clark (2000) fulfilling one's personal goals is dependent on the ability of using the appropriate means. To be able to use the appropriate means, women first need to define their personal goals. *"By thinking and feeling about my incentives I become increasingly convinced of my vision. I would benefit by writing down my motives, at this moment they are not really clear to me. And the clearer they are, the better I'm able to prioritize."* (AR, health care).

Setting goals and priorities is part of time management, which consists of the skills of scheduling and planning activities, and organization (Macan, 1994). The findings in this research which suggest that women who are aware of their goals and priorities are better able to fulfill these priorities, are supported by the findings of Fenner and Renn (2010). They found that employees who set goals and priorities on a daily basis may set objectives for both the work and the family domains that help them effectively manage the boundaries between domains and suppress negative effects on family behavior.

Women in training and development were most aware of their goals, because they applied concepts from their work into their own life. Because they are advising others on defining and fulfilling life goals, they know all the techniques how to do this themselves. Women in training and development said they tried to become aware of what mostly remains subconscious. If they became aware of their real incentives, they were able to develop these in a down-to-earth and practical way.

Women mentioned various methods to define their personal goals in work and life. All self-employed had a business plan, but the degree of details differed among them. Some only had an idea of their end, but "go with the flow" in daily life. Others defined year goals and set weekly targets. Women in training and development and business women define their goals the most structural, also in private life. They did this by taking a look at their life from a distance, as if they were observers. In most cases the family was involved in this process. Methods of defining goals women used were creating a vision board, making a wish list, defining targets such as a minimum of three visits to the theatre, dividing time between domains, drawing insight cards or playing an insight game, looking in the mirror asking yourself: do I do what I really want?, and creating various scenarios of work and private life.

According to the self-employed women reflection on personal goals is important in order to hold one's course. Women who have a business partner often reflect together on their work, and also share their feelings about their private situation. Women working solo reflect alone or with their life partner. Women in commercial service did not reflect at all on their balance. Women in health care were sensitive to their feelings of satisfaction, and handled in accordance to that whenever they felt it was necessary. Women in business service reflected more systematically, for example by discussing their balance with others or by spending time alone in meditation or walking the dog. Women in training and development reflected the most. They reflect every evening on how they spend their energy that day, or at the end of the week questioning whether they reached their goals. Also during the day they are mindful: *"I'm continuously aware of how I'm feeling. If I don't feel well, I look for the cause. I check whether I still act in line with my goals"* (JW, training and development). In the following table, the former is summarized.

**Table 3: Ways of defining and reflecting on personal goals per sector.**

	<b>Defining personal goals</b>	<b>Reflection</b>
<b>Training and development</b>	Apply coaching techniques	Every day
<b>Commercial service</b>	Go with the flow	No reflection
<b>Business service</b>	Year goals and weekly targets	Systematically
<b>Health care</b>	Take time to go inward	When they felt off-balance

The skills of defining and reflecting on personal goals, in order to fulfill them, are related to women's job. Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, and Houtman (2003) define this as an interaction process in which a worker's functioning in one domain is influenced by load reactions that have built up in the other

domain. Concerning defining personal goals, women apply the skills they use in their jobs to their personal life. In this case, the interaction processes is facilitating, which means “*a form of synergy in which resources from one role enhance participation in the other role*” (Voydanoff, 2004: 399). The skills of defining and reflecting on personal goals enhance the performance of work and life roles, because of the awareness of their personal goals before being able to fulfil these. Another work-related resource which enhances women’s work-life balance is experience, which will be discussed in the next section.

#### 5.3.4. Experience

What all self-employed women in this study helped to combine tasks in various life domains, was the number of years of being self-employed. The longer women run their business, the more problems they have faced, and the more they have learnt. By experiences they gained skills such as assigning tasks to others, communicating, maintaining their borders, flexibility, accepting, and reflecting. “*You become more capable. Previously I couldn’t sleep from things I find normal these days. Then I had a plan, but I didn’t know how it would turn out. In the beginning everything was exciting.*”(RD, commercial service).

The more experience women have, the better they know what they find important for their business. They are better able to give directions. Also in private life they become more aware of their personal goals, especially if they have experienced a burn-out, health problems, a divorce, or a difficult delivery. The experiences women gain in their work are related to their experiences in life. Together they provide the most important resource according to women, which is faith. Having faith that it turns out all right helps them in pursuing their goals. “*Faith. It helps me to let it go for a moment. I don’t have to deal with it right now, I don’t have to call right back, react on an email, face the problem right now. I have encountered so many difficulties, but still I have a fantastic life. Experiences taught me to trust on life. What happens to me now will be of good use later, although I don’t know exactly how right now*” (IS, coach).

#### 5.3.5. Conclusion

A high degree of autonomy is considered to be the main resource which enhances a work-life balance, and therefore often a reason to become self-employed. However, the type and degree of autonomy are not equal to all self-employed. Analyzed from an organizational sociological perspective, the degree of autonomy differs according to the type of self-employment, location of the office, and the nature of the job. To specify the latter, mainly the type of contact with clients and its consequences influences women’s degree of autonomy. In the following table, the influence of the mentioned conditions on job, spatial, and time autonomy are summarized.

**Table 4: The type and degree of autonomy experienced by self-employed.**

	Nature of the job	Type of self-employment	Other
Job autonomy	T&D: reminded of work life balance during work time BS: relation with clients HC: responsibility for human beings	Solo: no consideration Partners: able to alter tasks Personnel: expanding business but also “pull the chart”	
Spatial autonomy	CS: A-location for clients HC: home visits to clients	Personnel: space needed, professional, travel time	Family: economic situation
Time autonomy	CS: set opening hours HC: irregular shifts, often work together with others, extra work during holidays BS: able to plan, but last-minute work T&D: able to plan appointments, no work in summer	Solo: own planning Partners: difficult to meet each other Personnel: not flexible, interrupting in private life	Location of the office: At home: no travel time, household chores in between Outside: working efficiently

Although autonomy is an important resource, it is not sufficient. Social support, as well emotionally as practically, was important to all women. Voydanoff (2004) defines support as a *boundary spanning resource*, which influences aspects of work and family roles that directly address how work and family connect with each other. In organizations, this can be organizational support for coordinating work and family obligations. Regardless of whether employees use the offered policies, the perceived flexibility and control may reduce demands for organizational employees. Self-employed indicated that they “can’t do it without support”, which in their case comes from their spouse, friends, or business partner.

The skills women used to define and reflect on their personal goals appeared to be an important resource. Although women defined and reflected differently, they all applied the techniques they use in their work. According to Voydanoff (2004), these skills would be a within domain work-resource, which enhance performance in the life domain. However, self-employed do not experience their resources as coming from one domain. This finding is supported by Powell and Greenhaus (2006), who found that resources are not necessarily generated in one role. Because roles in various domains are more similar for self-employed, it might be that resources are more difficult to label as coming from one domain. Experience for example, is gained in work and life domains simultaneously and together generate faith, which helped women in pursuing their personal goals. The definition of a resource as “structural or psychological assets that may be used to facilitate performance, reduce demands, or generate additional resources” (Voydanoff, 2004: 398), applies to self-employed women’s experiences. However, they cannot be divided into within work domain resources and within life resources. This might be because self-employed do not experience their life as compartmentalized as organizational employees. In the next paragraph I will discuss whether this also applies to the demands which hinder self-employed women’s work-life balance.

#### 5.4. “Which demands hinder self-employed women’s work-life balance?”

Demands refer to “structural or psychological claims associated with role requirements, expectations, and norms to which individuals must respond or adapt by exerting physical or mental effort” (Voydanoff, 2004: 398). Because women in various sectors have different role requirements, they experienced different demands. Women in training and development often had “the feeling I always need to do something”, which held them back from setting priorities in their work and private life. This might be related to their urge of constant personal development. Furthermore, they experienced caring for children and sick or elder family members as a demand. Women in commercial service experienced work demands related to the economic crisis, social media, travel time, and people wanting things from them. For women in business service, the main demands were meetings during the evenings, the shortage of time to implement all of their ideas, expectations from personnel and clients, and the difficulty of letting personnel do their work without interfering. In private life women in business service found it difficult to combine their work with the job of their partner, wanting to be involved with the family, and taking care of the children and other family members such as their parents. Women in health care experienced emotional happenings at their work which occupied them in their free time, and time pressure as main demands. Besides work related role demands, women experienced three major role demands which will be discussed in this section: being a breadwinner, societal developments, and thoughts and beliefs.

##### 5.4.1. Breadwinner position

Women who were breadwinner experienced their position in the family as a demand because of the pressure to support the family. They could not take a break whenever they want, because they “*need to earn their bread*”. Almost all breadwinners experienced a field of tension between wanting to earn (more) money and spending (more) time with the family. Being a breadwinner gives self-employed women the opportunity to spend a maximum of time on their business, which satisfies them because of being able to turning their ideas into reality. “*We are always looking for balance. I have my own*

*business, which takes a lot of time and energy. But because of that, my spouse is always there for the children. That would be impossible if my spouse would work as well or if I would have another job. Our income would not be high enough. We choose not to send our children to daycare, which means I have to work more” (RB, health care).*

Women who are not the breadwinner at home, often solo workers, felt more balanced in general. They had a spouse with an income and they were able to reject new projects when their workload became too high. *“At the moment I’m breadwinner in our family, but in general our contribution is equal. Earning money for me means that I’m doing well. It provides insight in my value on the market. I want to be financially independent, but for me there’s no pressure to earn money for supporting the family. I don’t let myself become stressed out” (AE, business service).*

#### 5.4.2. Developments in society

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According to self-employed women changes in society imposed norms which limited their satisfaction with fulfilling their personal goals. Women in health care experienced financial cuttings and a higher result orientation, which causes a higher work-load and a negative atmosphere. Women in health care therefore experience a field of tension between paying attention to their clients, which is often their main motivation to work in the health care sector, and results. They felt hindered in fulfilling their personal goals, because they had to adapt to rules and general guidelines in their sector implemented by the government. *“The earnings are dramatic, in the whole health care sector. Whatever you do, you don’t get paid in health care. That has to do with the government, they maintain certain rates. You cannot earn more than is covered by the insurance company. Each year they try to keep that rate as low as possible. It hasn’t been raised for the last six years now, while the inflation does increase. It’s not a job to make big money” (CK, health care).*

Social media is another societal development, which influences women’s work-life balance. Whereas training and development and women in business service experience social media and internet as helpful in finding customers and keeping their relations up to date, women in commercial service and in health care experience it as a “waste of time”. They feel pressured to provide for an online page, but do not see the use of it. *“My clients asked for a Hyves-page, because they wanted to stay in contact with each other. To go to the fitness club together next time. Luckily I have young personnel, they update that page for me. I don’t want to be involved in it myself” (CS, commercial service).*

Some women experience mobile devices as practical, others feel restrained by the pressure they feel to always be up to date and accessible. *“I have to use it, but Twitter, I find it so stupid, such a waste of time. Get a life, do something useful. I ask my personnel to do it for me. And sometimes during the weekends, I send a tweet from home. We cannot not do it, people need to be able to find us on the internet.” (IO, commercial service).*

#### 5.4.3. Thoughts and beliefs

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The main demands self-employed experienced, were their own thoughts and beliefs. The pressure of needing to fulfill tasks in work and life domains, or meeting various role demands, increased because of their own judgments about what they should do. *“I want to do it well for others. Being a good business woman, a good mother, a good wife. I think it’s a female thing, striving towards perfection. But it’s just not possible. I learned to let go of that. I try to, but it’s a slow process. After my children were born I learned that sometimes it’s just not possible to achieve what you want at that moment. For example when I’m in a hurry, want to finish something, then I want to dress the kids quickly and go. But then I just dressed one, he pees in his pants... It just doesn’t work, then I think ok, let go... It’s no use wanting to do it all at the same time, doing it all perfect but being stressed all the time” (IH, business service)*

Most women did not feel hindered by expectations of others: *“When my eldest was born and I was at home, my mother in law asked me: “Are you still in your pyjamas?? It’s ten o’clock, neighbors might come by to visit you, get dressed!”. Then I think: so what? Then I put the baby in their arms and I get showered. There also certain circles at school. We’re on the Bible belt, you can’t mow the grass at Sunday. I don’t do that out of respect for the neighbors. But I do shuffle around in the garden, for me that’s relaxation. You can dispute about that, but for me it’s true. And you’re supposed to wash your car every week. It’s always like: “what would the neighbors think?”. I’m not expecting any work from the religious around here. They don’t do business with someone who’s not a member of the club” (MF, business service).*

Women’s own feelings about the situation, such as always needing to do something, perfectionism, guilt towards friends and family, wanting to satisfy others, and wanting to be involved in work and the family did hinder women in fulfilling their personal goals. *“I have to do the daily things, bringing the kids to school and the household, that’s normal. But what I have to do from myself... In the beginning I was very satisfied, but now I see a lot of competition who take it to the next level. I’m mirroring myself to them. Then I think I need to do it as they do. It’s very difficult to let that go and stay with myself. That’s partly because of how I was raised, it has always been inside me. That’s what makes it so difficult. If I would not have such high standards life would be a lot easier.” (RB, commercial service).*

According to Adams and Lenz (2010), women often feel hindered in fulfilling their personal goals because they have always based their “sense of I” on their identity as a wife and mother. When women see themselves as someone who is expected to meet other person’s needs, they feel insecure and confused about fulfilling their own needs. They often feel guilty, egoistical and unwomanly if they try to pursue their personal goals.

#### 5.4.4. Conclusion

Some demands women experienced were *within work-domain demands* and related to the sector women worked in. These demands are summarized in the following table:

**Table 5: Within work-domain demands per sector.**

	<b>Within work-domain demands</b>
<b>Training and development</b>	Psychological demand to constantly develop
<b>Commercial service</b>	Financial cuttings and expectations from clients (need to use social media)
<b>Business service</b>	Evening meetings, time pressure, and expectations from clients
<b>Health care</b>	Emotional events and time pressure

Analyzing from an organizational sociological perspective, the demands of women in training and development and women in health care are related to the type of work. The psychological and emotional aspects became a demand when experienced too much. The demands of women in commercial service were related to developments in society influencing their sector. Women in business service felt hindered by demands related to the nature of their job, such as working hours and the relation to their clients.

Women who were breadwinner felt hindered in fulfilling their personal goals in work and life because of the responsibility to take care of the family. Societal developments such as social media were hindering women’s balance in commercial service, but enhancing the balance of women in training and development and in business service. Social media are a demand for the former and a resource for the latter. Furthermore, societal developments which generate resources and demands do not fit Voydanoff (2004)’s model of within domain resources and demands. Also the main demand all women experienced, their own restrictive beliefs and thoughts, influences the ability of pursuing one’s goals both in work and life: *“The expectations of my father do play a role, both in work and life. I can’t separate that anymore. I’m working on it, but it’s difficult because it’s so interwoven in all my*

*patterns and behavior. It's good to be driven, but sometimes it's just too much, over the top. Then I want to prove myself in work, but also in private life" (CS, commercial service).*

The next paragraph discusses how resources and demands influence the way women shape and manage borders between domains, and how this affects their work-life balance.

### 5.5. "How do self-employed women shape and manage borders between the work and life domain(s) and how does this affect their work life balance?"

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Almost all women in this study had been organizationally employed before they started their own business. They said the borders between work and private life became less strong in general. These weak boundaries provided them with flexibility, but also brought along the danger of work intensification. In this section I will discuss how women deal with work intensification, how they shape and manage borders between the work and life domains, and how this affects their work-life balance.

#### 5.5.1. Work intensification

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In this study we found that women who were breadwinner experienced more work intensification than women who were no breadwinner. The latter were able to reject new tasks if they felt unable to manage various life domains. The main factor or demand that caused work intensification according to self-employed women, was their own thoughts and beliefs as was discussed earlier in section 5.4.3. The pressure of needing to fulfill tasks in work and life domains, or meeting various role demands (Voydanoff, 2004), increased because of their own judgments about what and how they should work. Women had different styles of managing their domains in order to prevent work-intensification and maintain a work-life balance, as will be discussed in the next section.

#### 5.5.2. Border management

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According to Campbell Clark (2000) people are border crossers, who make daily transitions between domains. People shape these domains, mold the borders between them, and determine their relationship to the domain and its members. The central idea of the border theory is that work and home generally differ in purpose and culture, because of which organizational employees daily transition between domains. However, all self-employed women in this study experienced the work-domain as similar or overlapping to other life domains. They do not experience work as having a contrasting purpose and culture to their life domains. Therefore, self-employed women are not crossing borders each time they go from one domain to the other as organizational employees do (Campbell Clark, 2000). The concepts of Campbell Clark's Border theory will be used to discuss self-employed women's strategies of managing domains.

#### *Integrating or segmenting domains*

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In section 5.1., self-employed women's work, family, social, and personal domains were discussed. Self-employed women reported overlap in personal goals. Furthermore, the means of attaining their goals in terms of behavior and thinking were similar, because self-employed cultivate their own culture at work. Their behavior contrasted little from home, except for maintaining a professional attitude. *"You need to remain kind, that's part of the job. Also with clients you don't feel connected with. I talk more at work, also when I don't feel like it. But I don't behave completely different. I don't feel like I have to switch personalities when I go home" (AZ, commercial service).*

Similar cultures at home and work probably result in a work culture which is less formal, allow for more self-determination, are more collective, more intimate, less hierarchical, and have a greater being-orientation as opposed to a doing-orientation (Clark and Farmer, 1998).

Nippert-Eng (1996) describes the way individuals deal with the differences between domains as a continuum, ranging from 'integration' to 'segmentation'. If domains are integrated, there is no

distinction between what belongs to home and what belongs to work. Segmented domains involve very different intellectual and emotional approaches. Because a balance is a subjective experience, depending on how to fulfill one's personal goals, it does not automatically involve an integrated approach. According to Languilaire (2009), individuals have a natural preference for either integrating or segmenting their life domains.

In this study, the self-assessment test "Identifying your flexstyle" from the book *CEO of Me* (Kossek and Lautsch, 2008) was used to determine whether women integrated or separated their work and personal life. The self-assessment test, which consists of 15 statements, can be found in appendices D. During the interviews, women were asked whether they tried to separate or integrated their narrated domains. For a third of the women, the answers did not match. These women mainly indicated that they separated work from other life domains. However, from the interviews it appeared that they integrated work with other domains, mainly with the family domain. During one interview with a woman who was convinced of strictly separating work from family for example, her children ran into her office and enthusiastically started telling about school that morning. This difference in perception could be because the test was designed for organizational employees, and sometimes difficult to answer for self-employed. It could also be that women had a different preference from their actual style of managing domains or were unaware of how they managed various life domains.

In general, self-employed said to have no preference for either separating or integrating work and life. Women who had an office outside their homes mainly separated their work and other life domains. Women who worked at home had no strong preference for either separating or integrating. Only one woman was very aware of her strategy: *"It's mainly for the outer world that I separate my work from private life. I noticed in the past, when I worked from home, the doorbell rang very often. Wanting to be friendly, I often asked: do you want coffee? Tea? Then you let someone in, the neighbor for example, and your morning is gone... Before you know it you have no time left to work. So now I strictly separate my work from the rest, at least for others. It makes clear who you are and what you do. I think many mothers at the school of my children think I don't work. I find that funny. If they don't ask me, I don't tell them."* (HG, business service).

How women segment or integrate work and life domains will be discussed by examining the borders between domains and how women shape and manage them.

### *Borders*

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Individuals segment or integrate work and home by using borders; lines of demarcation between domains, defining the point at which domain-relevant behavior begins or goals (Campbell Clark, 2000). Campbell Clark distinguishes between physical, temporal, and psychological borders. Physical borders were clear for women who had an office outside, but less clear for women working at home. Women in training and development all had an office at home. Some of them preferred to maintain physical borders, such as a door: *"When I go through that door I feel mother, and when I'm on this side than I'm director of this company"* (AS, training and development).

Others preferred to have no borders at all: *"I work at the kitchen table. I do have an office at home as well, but I'm never there. I work with my laptop in the kitchen, sometimes the children are at home, or my spouse. And the dog is always there for company. My table at home is more of a mess than here at the office, there's always a fruit bowl, the newspaper, mail, you know.."* (GD, business service).

Visiting the women at home, it was remarkable that the women's offices had a different design than the rest of the house and was often marked with a sign of "the office". However, women working at home often also worked at other locations or had appointments outside their homes. Women in commercial service all worked outside the home and had a preference for segmenting. Their work location often felt as "my own place". *"I think I'm self-employed too long for being able to let*

*somebody else run it. I want to keep it for myself. Sometimes my spouse wants to interfere, but it's my thing. He didn't grow with the business, he doesn't know everything about it I think it's healthy to keep it like that"*(AZ, commercial service).



Figure 5: working at the kitchen table (JW, training and development)



Figure 6: office located outside the home (IO, commercial service)

Women's temporal borders, which mark when work is done from when home responsibilities start (Campbell Clark, 2000), were not very clear. Self-employed women mainly preferred to be flexible, and not set standard working hours. Some women maintained set work hours, either to have enough time to spend on their work or to prevent themselves from work-intensification. However, all women indicated they were not very strict in maintaining these temporal borders. Especially considering taking care of their children when needed, they would reschedule their working hours.

The psychological borders, which consist of rules created by individuals, dictating thinking patterns, behavior patterns, and emotions indicating what is appropriate for one domain but not for the other (Campbell Clark, 2000), were the least clear. Women who experienced their work as personal development, mainly in training and development and in business service, psychologically integrated their work and other life domains. They experienced no psychological borders between them. They used their work, but also their social contacts, to fulfill their personal end of development. Women in health care also all integrated their work and life domains. In all life domains they were taking care of others, only maintaining a different approach. They especially could and did not want to separate their feelings between domains.

Women who were no breadwinner and did not make use of daycare, worked during school hours and took care of the children the rest of the day. Therefore, their work was relatively separated from other life domains. Women with set working hours often experienced a moment of change, mostly when they traveled from their work to school to pick up their children. *"I cycle to work, that is a well-considered choice. Even when it rains. I leave here at three o'clock, then I'm home at 3.10. At 3.15 school's out. Then you're in a totally different world. Waiting at the school's playground, between other mothers, the first thing you hear is: Can I play with him? Can I play with her? You're forced to switch, you have no choice really. When I cycle home I don't think about anything, except for getting home as quick as possible. Time flies."*(HG, business service).

## Permeability

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For all women, elements from the work domain entered the other life domains more than the other way around. Permeability was mainly psychological. Once at work, women did not think about their private life anymore, unless their children were sick. However, women often thought about their work in private life, mainly about task that needed to be done or new ideas they wanted to develop. Women in health care's borders were the least permeable: *"I'm an actor, I don't take it all home with me. In daycare I once had a girl who told me: "I wish you could be my mother". Then you leave with a lump in your throat, that's heavy. But I don't commit to my clients; I keep a certain distance to them. That's the professionalism you need. And experience"*(CK, health care).

Women in training and development were aware of their permeable borders: *"I know I check my work mail too often. But if I do that, I'm focused on it. And when I return to my family, I'm really there for them. For me that's part of balancing: being mindful, whatever you're doing"* (IS, training and development).

## Flexibility

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Self-employed women experienced flexible physical, temporal, and psychological borders as discussed in section 5.3.1.. They enjoyed the autonomy of being able to set their own borders at any time. Women felt relatively free to work the hours they choose and the location they choose, although restricted by their type of self-employment and sector. Ideas, insights, and emotions flow between domains easily, but more from the home to the work domain than the reverse.

## Blending

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In women's situations with permeable and flexible borders, blending occurred. This happened mainly between the work and family domain. Especially women who were no breadwinner often took care of their children after school, and checked their email in between. The women who worked with her spouse in a family business experienced the most blending: *"It was very difficult, especially with birthday parties and holidays. We combined social life with working, than we invited our frigoals to have dinner at our restaurant. My sister was in the kitchen, my mother in administration, and my father drove the van. It worked, but qualitative, privacy time... no. I was always the contact point. And when I had some free time, there wasn't a moment my phone didn't ring. Afterwards, I think they blamed me for that"* (LA, commercial service).

As discussed in section 5.3.4, experience contributed to a work-life balance by generating faith. Experience is a form of psychological blending, because women used their personal experience in their work and used their work experience to enrich their private life.

## Border strength

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Border strength might differ between the two sides (Campbell Clark, 2000). For example, the work domain might be flexible in working hours, while the home domain is not flexible concerning children's school times. Most women found their family and work domain the most important. Their social and personal domains were less present and had less priority. Women who were breadwinner had stronger work borders, because their main priority was to take care of the family. Women who were no breadwinner often experienced taking care of their children and the household as their main priority. Therefore, their family borders were relatively strong.

Because self-employed women experience high permeability, flexibility, and blending, their overall borders are relatively weak. Some authors argue that when borders are less clear, employees have difficulties negotiating with family and employers about when and where work and home responsibilities are carried out (Hall and Richter, 1988). Campbell Clark (2000) proposes that the ideal degree of border strength depends on the differences of the domains. Because self-employed experience similarities between domains, weak borders will facilitate a work-family domains. In this

study, self-employed women who experienced weak borders were very satisfied with that: *“My business goes on while I’m having a good conversation with you, I’m meeting interesting people, the sun shines, and I earn enough money. What else is there?”* (HB, health care).

Furthermore, Campbell Clark suggests that borders will be stronger in the direction of the more powerful domain. This is supported by the findings of this study, which indicate that breadwinners, who’s work domain is often more powerful than for women who are no breadwinner, are stronger marked by time and location. They experience a higher pressure to earn money. However, because they strongly identify themselves with their work, strong work borders help them in fulfilling their personal goals.

### *Border crossers*

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In accordance to Campbell Clark’s theory (2000), self-employed women are central participants in their domains. They have influence because of their ability to create and internalization the domain’s cultures and values. Influence provides them with power to negotiate and make changes to the domain and its border. Furthermore, their identity is closely tied with the domain, which increased their motivation to manage borders and domains. In general, self-employed women found meaning in their responsibilities, meshing with their self-concept.

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) found that for individuals who identify highly with more than one role and try to fill both roles at once, balance is threatened. A self-employed woman who worked with her spouse felt frustrated because she no longer identified with her work domain: *“I wanted to spend time with our daughter, but my spouse was more focused on the business. I had the feeling I had to do it all by myself. We weren’t running a family together, only a business. I expected him to pay more attention to our family. That’s where it went wrong, he just couldn’t. I started to hate the business for that”* (LA, commercial service).

### *Domain members*

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Since work and family activities are generally carried out with others, border and domain creation and management is an inter-subjective activity, in which other domain members are involved (Campbell Clark, 2000). At work, self-employed did not experience persons who were strongly influential, such as supervisor would be for organizational employees. Women working with a business partner did negotiate their work domains, but often worked solo the most of the time and only meet once or twice a week. *“Sometimes it’s difficult, but we talk about it now. Our life are different, what we find important is different, what we enjoy is different, but we want a high standard coaching. That’s where we find each other. Appreciation has grown, but if one of us stops, we won’t see each other again. We really have a work-relationship (LK, training and development).”*

Women working with their spouse experienced the strongest influence of a domain member on the creation and management of their work and family domain. However, also in the home domain women were mainly responsible for the household. Even women who were breadwinner felt that they were more influential than their spouse, although they had not have power over the home domain. Especially women in training and development discussed and negotiated values and borders in the family domain together. *“I’m teaching them: if you want to ask something while I’m working you always need to check first whether I’m on the phone. You walk in very carefully, and when I’m not on the phone you may ask something. You never come in when there’s a client. Officially they are not allowed to enter my workspace, but they do so anyway”* (LK, training and development).

According to Campbell Clark (2000) other domain awareness of domain members is important to find a balance. Self-employed women often said they could not do it without the support of their spouse. Some women’s spouses were strongly connected to their businesses, while other spouses supported their women more from a distance. According to self-employed it was not important that their

spouse knew all about their business, but that they were aware of the importance and motivations for their work.

### 5.5.3. Conclusion

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Self-employed women did not experience strong borders between work and life domains. Their personal goals and cultures in work and private life were similar, because of which they did not consciously “cross borders”. This is probably different from organizational employees, who do experience a borderland between the work and life domains (Campbell Clark, 2000). Women’s main priorities were in the work and family domain. Borders between those domains were the weakest for women working solo and women working at home. According to self-employed, weak borders help them to fulfill their personal goals in work and other life domains. Women who were breadwinner maintained stronger borders, for example by an office outside the home and setting strict work hours. For them the work domain was more important, because they had to support their families from their income.

The self-employed women in this study felt autonomous and “in charge” of creating their own purposes and cultures, rules, thought patterns, and behavior. They felt not surrounded by “border keepers”, who determined their personal goals and priorities in the work and other life domains. However, women did consider their spouses and children’s input concerning their work arrangements. Especially women who were breadwinner made appointments with their spouse about the income, the spouse’s job, and the tasks in the household. Women discussed their working hours at home and made arrangements with their children and spouse for “family-time”: *“Between six and eight, around dinner, it’s family time. All cells are turned off. And the Saturdays are for the kids too.” (AS, training and development).*

According to Campbell Clark (2000) a balance is determined by the way individuals manage borders between work and life domains. She assumes that individuals are aware of the different domains and corresponding role demands they are engaged in. However, according to this study only women in training and development and in business service were aware of their personal goals in work and other life domains. Furthermore, the self-assessment test and the interviews did not provide a coherent image about women either integrating or segmenting domains. This might imply that women are also unaware of their strategy in managing various domains. Rather than maintaining a certain flex style, they were more occupied with finding ways to pursue their personal goals. For some this meant that they had to integrate life domains, while others needed to segment domains. Women whose main priority was to be involved in their children’s life often worked at home and integrated work with the family domain. Women whose main priority was to expand their business and earn the main income, tended to segment their work from the other life domains in order to be focused. Summarizing this point, for self-employed women a balance is not the result of conscious border management as is suggested by Campbell Clark (2000), but as a consequence of their priorities in the work and life domains and how they tried to pursue these.

## 6. Conclusion

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In today's society the number of self-employed is rising. Especially women increasingly start their own business in order to be more flexible to combine paid work with taking care of their families and private life. In this study, the central question to be answered is: "How do Dutch self-employed women experience their work-life balance and how can differences in experiences be explained from an organizational sociological perspective?" Self-employed women's experiences are presented, explored, and understood in relation to their organizational context.

This study shows that Dutch female business owners are continuously balancing between responsibilities in work and life domains. Women might feel balanced at a certain point in time, but feel "off balance" the next moment. This finding stresses the importance of maintaining a subjective definition of a work-life balance as a process, rather than a measurable static moment in time. Looking for experiences, studying balance "in the eye of the beholder" is not separated from an individual's context (Grzywacz and Carlson, 2007), but influenced by many social and structural factors (Carlson, Grzywacz, and Zivnuska, 2009). In general, women feel balanced if they are satisfied with fulfilling their personal goals in both the work and life domain, by being able to use appropriate means (Campbell Clark, 2000:751). Because these goals are personal, the meaning of a balance is personal as well.

All women in this study mentioned the importance of security in the family domain and support in the social domain. However, goals in the work domain varied among women working in different sectors. The main goal of women working in training and development and women working in business service in the work domain was self-development. For women in commercial service this was success in the work domain, by which they meant high financial rewards and achievements to be proud of. Women in health care found human orientation most important. Self-employed women's personal goals in the family, social, and personal life domains were often reflected in their jobs. Especially their priorities in personal and social life were similar to their priorities in work. Because personal goals in all women's life domains were related to each other, self-employed women did not experience their life as compartmentalized in various domains. Work often felt as an extension of their personalities. This is probably different from organizational employed, who have to adapt to the organization's culture, including rules, thought patterns, and behaviour (Campbell Clark, 2000).

Overall, Dutch self-employed women are satisfied with their work-life balance, but keep struggling with it over time. Women who were aware of their balance process tried to act in line with their personal values. Women who were less aware of their personal goals were mainly reacting and rebalancing when they did not feel well. Besides awareness, it also appeared important to reflect on one's goal and (re)define them. The better women knew what they found important, the better they were able to set priorities, handle demands, and hence maintain their balance.

The degree of awareness of one's balance and the ability to define and reflect on personal goals in all life domains seems related to the nature of women's job. Women working in training and development and in business service were most aware of their personal goals in work and life. Women used the skills they gained in their work to define and fulfill personal goals in all life domains. Women in training and development applied coaching techniques and knew well how to analyze their situation. Women in business service scheduled, planned and set targets to maintain a balance, which is referred to as "time management" in literature (Macan, 1994). Women in health care spend time to reflect and monitor their feelings. Before they felt "off balance", they were able to spend time alone to feel how they should change the situation to feel balanced again. Women working in commercial service defined success in the work domain as their main goal, which implied they worked hard and spend little time at other domain goals. Kossek and Lautsch (2008) refer to these women as Work-Firsters: people whose identity and values focus mainly on the work role, conferring money, promotions, and occupational prestige.

Self-employed women experienced resources and demands which respectively enhanced and hindered their work-life balance. However, this research shows that not all women's resources and demands are coming from a specific domain as is suggested by Voydanoff (2004). In line with findings of Powell and Greenhaus (2006), this research shows that resources are generated and used in all life

domains simultaneously. Especially for self-employed, who do not experience their life as compartmentalized as organizational employees. Experience, which generated the resource “faith”, is developed over the years being self-employed but also by life events. Social support, which was an important resource for all self-employed women, also came from various domains. The spouse supported women in the family domain, friends were support in the social domain, and a business partner provided support in the work domain. The amount of social support seems influenced by the type of self-employment. Business partners often felt supported by each other, while solo self-employed often felt alone and looked for support in network meetings and via social media. All women indicated they “can’t do it without support”.

Self-employed women’s main resource is considered to be autonomy (Benz and Frey, 2003). The type and degree of autonomy varied among women. Women’s job autonomy was influenced by the contents of their work, the relation to their clients, and whether they needed to consider, share tasks and responsibilities with a business partner or personnel. Women’s spatial autonomy was limited by the needed accessibility of their clients, economic situation, professionalism, and travel time. Women’s time autonomy was influenced by the working hours common in their profession and the necessity to work last-minute, the ability to plan solo, the need to meet with a business partner, and the inflexibility of personnel, and the location of the office which enabled to either do households chores in between working at home or to work efficiently working at another location.

Every woman’s situation brings along specific demands, mainly related to the nature of the job. The demands of women in training and development and women in health care were related to the type of work. The psychological and emotional aspects in their job became a demand when experienced too much. The demands of women in commercial service were related to developments in society influencing their sector. Women in business service felt hindered by demands related to working hours and the relation to their clients. Furthermore, the position of women being breadwinner and societal developments were experienced as demands. All women experienced their own restrictive beliefs and thoughts, such as perfectionism and guilt, as the main factor that hindered them in pursuing goals in the work and other life domains.

The borders between the work and other life domains were relatively weak according to self-employed. Because personal goals and cultures were similar in all life domains, women did not consciously “cross borders”. Borders between domains were the weakest for women working solo and women working at home. Women who were breadwinner maintained stronger borders, for example by an office outside the home and setting strict work hours. For them the work domain was more important, because they had to support their families from their income. Their first priority was to make enough money, which limited their time to spend in the family, social, and personal life domain. The pressure of taking care of the family also limited their job autonomy, since their income was more important than fulfilling other personal goals in work.

The strength of the borders did not determine whether women integrated or separated their work from other life domains. Most self-employed were unaware of the domains and role related demands they were engaged in. Although they might have had a preference for either integrating or segmenting work from other life domains, a balance was not the result of conscious border management as is suggested by Campbell Clark (2000). It was rather a consequence of their priorities in the work and life domains and how they tried to pursue these.

To conclude, besides women’s home situation and societal developments, organizational characteristics such as the nature of the job, the type of self-employment, and the location of the office, do influence self-employed women’s work-life balance. The self-employed women in this study felt in charge of their life, experiencing a high degree of autonomy. However, self-employed women’s organizational context influenced their ability to define and reflect on goals, and provided them with specific resources and demands which respectively enhanced or hindered their work-life balance. Therefore, findings about self-employed women’s work-life balance cannot be generalized. I would like to note that self-employment in general is not a panacea for a work-life balance.

## 7. Discussion

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Work-life balance is an often discussed topic, and an often discussed concept. The underlying assumption of the definition used in this research is that individuals can shape to some degree the nature of the work and home domains, in order to create a desired balance (Campbell Clark, 2000). Almost all women acknowledged that they were in charge of their own life. They felt responsible for the choices they made in work and private life, and accepted the outcomes as the result of those choices.

### 7.1 Contributions to literature

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However, although women experienced autonomy in one's own actions or states in work and life domains, the organizational context influenced their resources and demands, respectively enhancing or hindering their work-life balance. Voydanoff (2004) distinguishes between resources and demands in the work domain (such as type of business, type of self-employment, location of office, years being self-employed) and resources and demands in the life domain (such as spouse, children, and social networks). This study contributes to developing Voydanoff's theory, by applying it to self-employed women's situation. This study shows that in the context of self-employment, resources and demands cannot be defined as either coming from the work domain or the life domains, which is in line with findings of Powell and Greenhaus (2006). Organizational context related factors may be experienced as a resource to some and as a demand to others, and even a resource and a demand at the same time to the same woman. Societal developments, such as the rise of social media for example, were hindering women's balance in commercial service because they experienced this as an extra task, a waste of time. However, women in training and development and in business service, experienced social media as a great resource in order to keep in touch with colleagues and get new clients. Social media are a demand for the former and a resource for the latter. Organizational conditions are valued differently, either as a resource or a demand, depending on one's personal goals or the nature of the work.

Furthermore, resources or demands do not necessarily occur from the work or home domain. Experience for example, is gained in work and life domains simultaneously and together generates faith, which helped women in pursuing their personal goals. It is difficult to determine whether the skills women used to define and reflect on their personal goals, come from the work or home domain. Women defined and reflected differently, applying techniques they also used in their work. These skills could be a within domain work-resource, enhancing performance in the life domain. However, by using and refining skills in the home domain, they will also improve performance in the work domain. For self-employed, the division between within work domain resources (and demands) and within life resources (and demands) is difficult to maintain. This might be because self-employed do not experience their life as compartmentalized as organizational employees

I would suggest that a distinction in resources and demands according to their function would be more useful. After having defined personal goals, women first need to know which conditions will support them in fulfilling these, before they are able to use them as a resource. Therefore, I would suggest categorizing resources and demands by their effect on defining goals, reflecting on goals in order to hold one's course, and on the ability to fulfill one's goals.

To conclude this point, resources and demands seem to be no structural claims or assets, as is suggested by Voydanoff (2004), since the influence resources and demands varies in accordance to one's personal goals and the nature of the work. Resources and demands are rather subjective terms and cannot be defined as general solutions or challenges that need to be faced by individuals, self-employed or not.

Another contribution is made to the theory of Campbell Clark (2000), who assumes that individuals are aware of their personal goals in work and private life, and just need to find the appropriate resources to fulfill these. However, this study shows that women's level of personal goal awareness is related to the nature of their job. Self-employed who defined and reflected on goals in

the work domain appeared to be better able to define and reflect on goals in the family, social, and personal life domains as well. Women might be satisfied with fulfilling their goals in the work domain, but unsatisfied with fulfilling goals in the family, social, and private domain. Personal goals might also change over time, for example after the birth of children. Therefore, contrary to Campbell Clark (2000), I do not see a balance as the consequence of border and domain management only. In order to find and maintain a balance, women need to define and reflect on their goals, both in the work and other life domains. This will provide them with directions and the ability to set priorities. Border management is a result of how individuals handle demands and use resources in order to fulfill their goals. Whether they integrate or segment life domains results from how they try to pursue their personal goals.

## 7.2. Research limitations

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As any research, also this study has some limitations. First, the sample of this study (N=24) is relatively small. Therefore, it is difficult to generalize the findings of this research to a larger population. This research focused on women's work-life balance experiences only, because for women a work-life balance is a more important reason to become self-employed than for men (Milkie, Peltola, 1999; Myrie, Daly, 2009). Women experience more difficulties with finding a balance than men, because women often spend more time and energy at their families, household work, and other social activities besides their job (Tausig and Fenwick, 2001). Women working in the sectors of training and development, business service, commercial service, and health care were interviewed because the Dutch Chamber of Commerce (2010) shows that these sectors are most popular among women. It might be that women in other, less female orientated, sectors have different work-life experiences.

Second, women in commercial service were difficult to reach. They were invited directly and by snowball method. There was less variation within this group, but the main criterion that they all had regular opening hours was met.

Third, the results of this research might be influenced by self-selection. The results show that the organizational context and the nature of the work influence women's work-life experience. It might be that the degree of women's work-life balance is different in other sectors. It might also be that the women who responded to the online call for participation were somehow triggered by this topic, for example because they had very good or bad work-life experiences. Their work-life balance awareness might be higher than average. However, women's work-life balance satisfaction in this study ranged from (self-reported) good to bad.

Fourth, although the women within the four groups are representative for their sector, they do not represent the whole sector they work in. Because the four groups each consists of six women, other occupations within these sectors are unrepresented. This problem could be solved by interviewing a larger number of self-employed women with various occupations.

Fifth, the reliance on self-report data may have biased the results. It may be that self-employed believe that they are "supposed" to have a great work-life balance relative to organizationally employed (Prottas and Thompson, 2006). Furthermore, women sometimes thought they separated work from other life domains, while their stories indicated they integrated, or vice versa.

Related to that and finally, the results from the self-assessment test (appendices D) did not match with the interviews. Participants sometimes indicated that statements were difficult to assess because they are aimed at organizational employees. It could also be that women preferred segmenting or integrating work and life domains, but were unable to do so at any time and therefore reported different experiences. These and other points should be taken into account in future research, as will be discussed in the next section.

### 7.3. Suggestions for future research

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Future research may first take into account the limitations of this research discussed above. Second, in this research self-employed are recognized as a heterogeneous group considering their organizational context. Future research could also include other factors, such as the influence of personal characteristics and the home situation on maintaining a balance between work and life domains. Work-life balance experiences might be different for women without children or women from a younger generation with other values. Third, research might distinguish between self-employed who are breadwinner and self-employed who are no breadwinner. The findings of this study suggest that being a breadwinner influences women's autonomy to define and fulfill their personal goals. Fourth, future research might also focus on men's situation. For men, the autonomy to take care of the children and work at the same time is a less important reason to become self-employed (Milkie, Peltola, 1999; Myrie, Daly, 2009). Men also experience other difficulties in maintaining a work life balance and defining personal goals, such as the belief that earning (more) money and pursuing a career is more important than fulfilling personal goals. Men often derive their identity from what they do for a living (Adams and Lenz, 2010). Therefore, other work-life balance experiences may be found. Lastly, this research could be expanded by including sectors with other characteristics.

The findings of this research show that self-employed women's work-life balance experiences are influenced by the organizational context. By interviewing a number of women in various settings, this research provided in-depth insights and understanding in how self-employed women balance between work and life. Future quantitative research may test whether these findings can be generalized to other self-employed (women). Five propositions to be tested were formulated:

1. Proposition: Self-employed experience domains as more similar than organizational employed.
2. Proposition: The more aware self-employed are of their personal goals in the work and life domains, the higher their work-life balance satisfaction.
3. Proposition: Self-employed use skills gained in the work domain to define and reflect on personal goals in all life domains.
4. Proposition: Self-employeds degree of job, spatial, and time autonomy is influenced by the nature of their job, type of self-employment, and location of the office  
Proposition: Self-employed who are breadwinner experience higher work related demands than self-employed who are no breadwinner.
5. Proposition: The strength of self-employeds borders between domains is influenced by the type of self-employment, location of the office, and being a breadwinner or not.

Since the number of self-employed (struggling with their work-life balance) is rising, future research is recommended not to keep them waiting too long.

## **8. Recommendations for (future) self-employed (women)**

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Balancing between work and life is hard working. One moment you feel balanced, the next moment you don't. A balance is not a static moment or a stable break-even point you can reach and stay at. As life goes on you need to keep balancing, as if you were walking on a tightened rope. Self-employed have a relatively high degree of autonomy and flexibility, but also experience high responsibilities. Since every situation is unique, also the feeling of "being balanced" is unique. Based on this this research, general guidelines are formulated which may help you finding your balance.

### **1. Explore your life rope**

A work-life balance is a general term, which has a different meaning to all self-employed. What is your definition of work? And what does your life furthermore consist of? You can think of different domains, such as your work, family life, social life, and personal life. Explore them by mapping out how much time and energy you spend on each domain. Which other persons are involved? What do you find important values? What are your goals in work, family, social, and personal life? What are your priorities? In what direction do you want your life rope to go?

### **2. Props to remain standing**

To be able to fulfill your goals in work and life, you need resources to fulfill these. Future self-employed may think of a type of business that would enable them to fulfill their goals in work, but also allows them to fulfill other life goals. Personnel, for example, allow you to expand your business, but also brings along responsibilities, care, and administration. Being self-employed, you may think of resources that could improve your balance. What is necessary to fulfill your personal goals? If you have difficulties with finding new clients, you may think of using social media. If your goal is to spend more time with your children, you could consider working at home more often. For some this might be a perfect combination, while others might prefer to work at an outside location. What do you need to remain standing strong?

### **3. Wind, bugs, and other distractions**

This research shows that the sector you work in, the type of self-employment, and the location of your office all influence your ability to balance between work and other life priorities. Future self-employed might think of whether business characteristics provide more resources or demands. Is this aspect of your business more enhancing or hindering your work-life balance? Are there alternatives? Self-employed might look for factors that hinder them in finding a balance. How can you turn them into something positive? Solo self-employed that enjoy their freedom but miss social support in their job could go to network meetings or join an online community for example. What is making you wobbling at the rope and how do you find your stability again?

### **4. Look at your feet for a moment**

It is more efficient to sometimes slow down and look at where you are standing than to just keep running. Some need a burn-out to realize what is important to them in life. Don't let yourself fall of your rope, but take some time to look at your feet: how are you standing? Some self-employed use their lunchtime for reflection during the day, others draw out their plans at New Year's Eve for example. Are you still going in the right direction, or have your priorities changed? Also your resources and demands might have changed, for example due to the birth of another child, the changed job of your spouse, financial cuttings in your sector, or other developments such as the rise of social media. You might change the direction of your rope, or alter your business and home situation. Adjust your resources and demands in a way they will support your goals in work, family, social, and personal life.

### **5. Than lift your head, and... keep balancing!**

As life goes on, your rope will go on. A challenge, but also an opportunity to play. Enjoy it!

## 9. Reflection

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Writing this thesis was a balancing process. I constantly needed to adjust my (implicit) assumptions. In the beginning I discovered new theories which changed my perspective on work-life balance thoroughly. Later on I talked to women about their experiences. New insights often made me wobbling for a short period of time, but led to more stability in the end. In this chapter I will reflect on my process of doing research.

In September, I started by defining my research question. Although I noticed that a work-life balance was an often used concept in science as well as in popular media, it was difficult to find an all-embracing definition. As discussed in the method section, there are various ways to measure a balance. I realized that I could not use those definitions because I was looking for experience, which is subjective. Personally, I found it difficult to study women's experiences from an organizational sociological perspective solely. For the reason experiences are subjective, I was convinced that it was mainly women's personal character which influenced the way they tried to fulfill personal goals in life. Just as the self-employed women in this study, I feel responsible for my life, the choices I make, and the outcomes of those choices. The underlying assumption is that individuals create their own life. Considering the focus of my studies Public Administration and Organizational Science, I tried to look more at the interaction between women and their context. Women's character then became one of the influential factors.

In December, after having read a lot of books and papers, I started thinking about how to use current theories in my own research. I defined balance as "satisfaction with fulfilling personal goals", but expected it to be very difficult for women to explicitly name their personal goals. Therefore, in my interview invitation I asked women to think about this up front. Looking for personal goals, during the interviews I had to pose several control questions. After having coded the data, I summarized similar goals under collective terms. My presupposition about limited awareness was confirmed when I noticed that women found it difficult to mention what they found important in life and how much time and energy they spend at various domains. Furthermore, women often indicated that they separated (or integrated) domains, while from their stories the opposite seemed to be the case. After the interviews, women often thanked me for creating this awareness about how they managed their life domains. The conversation often served as a mirror for them.

The interviews made me also think about my own situation. I found the often used definition of a work-life balance as managing "work and family" or "work and private time" very limited. Also individuals without a family or even without a fulltime job (as myself for example) experience difficulties with balancing personal goals in different aspects of life. Languilaire (2009)'s classification of work, family, social, and personal domains appeared to be very useful. Furthermore, the finding that all women acknowledged the importance of defining goals but only a few of them had a clear vision on this made me think about my priorities in life. Women experienced difficulties with making plans on the long term because of unforeseen happenings and life events. Therefore, it is important to reflect systematically on goals and readjust resources and demands (insofar possible). This insight made me realize that my priorities in this period of time were to write my thesis and my yoga teacher training. It helped me to focus and plan my tasks. Where I first integrated all my activities, I now started to segment more. During the week I worked on my thesis from 9.00 to 14.00. Then I had a break for running, swimming or yoga. In the evenings I had time to study yoga or spend time with friends. Because my priorities were clear, I felt satisfied with fulfilling my goals in all life domains.

I enjoyed working at home most of the time. I was able to drink my own coffee and do some household chores in between, to take my eyes off the computer screen for a moment. From my own experience I noticed that it's not so easy but also unnecessary to strictly integrate or segment work

from private life. Because my research was so important to me, it was constantly on my mind, also during the weekends in my “private time”. On the other hand, I sometimes send a private email or message via Facebook while I was actually working on my research. Sometimes this was distracting, other times it inspired me to go on. I can now understand that it is difficult to answer a question about integrating or segmenting your life domains. Even vague statements as “all is one” and “I’m my work and at the same time I’m not” become less vague now.

I experienced a high degree of autonomy working solo and at home. However, I sometimes longed for more (social) support. Sometimes I felt lonely during this whole year project. At first my fellow students were able to comment and provide feedback on my research proposal. As the research progressed, ideas became to develop mainly in my head. There was a lot of unstructured information in there, which had to be processed first. At times it was difficult to accept that research takes time and one cannot force ideas out one self. Working solo, I was lucky to find social support from Tram Tran ([vrouwen-ondernemen.nl](http://vrouwen-ondernemen.nl)) who could reflect on my ideas from her own experience. My supervisor Laura den Dulk was there to steer me in the right research direction and complement my own ideas with new suggestions and literature.

Just like the women I interviewed, experience was a great resource for me to enhance my work-life balance. Towards the end of my research project, my priorities became clearer. I knew what to work on as time became limited. Sometimes I had to adjust my thesis, which I interpreted as “starting all over” or “it will never be good enough”. In the end, however, I trusted on a good ending. I am very satisfied with fulfilling my goal in my study-life domain: finishing my research thesis.

Now it’s time to set new priorities.

## Samenvatting “Zelfstandig ondernemen: het medicijn voor een work-life balance?”

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Het aantal zelfstandig ondernemers in de huidige samenleving neemt toe (Kösters, 2009). Met name vrouwen beginnen steeds vaker voor zichzelf om hun *work-life balance* te verbeteren, in dit onderzoek gedefinieerd als “tevredenheid met het vervullen van persoonlijke doelen in zowel het werk domein als privé domeinen, door het kunnen inzetten van de juiste hulpbronnen” (Campbell Clark, 2000:751). In deze Nederlandse studie is gebruik gemaakt van interviews (N=24) om de ervaringen van zelfstandig ondernemende moeders met het managen van betaald werk, een gezin, een sociaal- en een persoonlijk leven te verkennen. Hoe ervaren Nederlandse zelfstandig ondernemers hun work-life balance en hoe kunnen verschillen in ervaringen worden verklaard vanuit een organisatie sociologisch perspectief? In plaats van zelfstandig ondernemers als één groep te beschouwen wordt rekening gehouden met organisatie contextfactoren, zoals het type onderneming, de sector, de aard van het werk, de werklocatie en het aantal jaren ervaring als zelfstandige. De ervaringen van vrouwen worden bestudeerd in relatie tot de organisatiecontext.

Over het algemeen zijn Nederlandse zelfstandig ondernemende vrouwen tevreden met hun work-life balance. Echter, zij blijven balanceren en zien een balans niet als een statisch en meetbaar moment. Bovendien is de betekenis van balans subjectief, omdat persoonlijke doelen variëren. Vrouwen die zich bewust waren van hun persoonlijke doelen in het werk-, gezins-, sociale- en persoonlijke domein waren beter in staat om te balanceren en te handelen in lijn met hun persoonlijke waarden. De persoonlijke doelen van ondernemers in privé kwamen vaak overeen met doelen in het werk. Vooral prioriteiten in het persoonlijke en sociale domein kwamen overeen met prioriteiten in het werk domein. Ondernemers ervoeren hun leven niet als strikt opgedeeld in verschillende domeinen. Dit is waarschijnlijk anders voor organisatie medewerkers, die hun persoonlijke domein moeten aanpassen aan de organisatie cultuur met zijn eigen regels, gedachtepatronen en gedragsvoorschriften (Campbell Clark, 2000).

De ondernemers in dit onderzoek voelden zich verantwoordelijk voelden voor hun leven, de keuzes die ze maakten en de uitkomsten daarvan. Toch bleek de organisatie context invloed te hebben op de hulpbronnen en belemmeringen die het balanceren respectievelijk makkelijker of moeilijker maakte. De mate van werk-, locatie-, en tijdsautonomie, vaak beschouwt als de grootste hulpbron van zelfstandigen, werd beïnvloed door de inhoud van het werk, de relatie tot de klant, werktijden, de werkplek en of vrouwen moesten overleggen en samenwerken met een zakenpartner of personeel. De vaardigheden die vrouwen gebruikten om persoonlijke doelen in alle domeinen te definiëren, erop te reflecteren en te herdefiniëren werden over het algemene opgedaan tijdens het werk. Omdat vrouwen levensdomeinen niet als sterk afgebakend ervaren, werden andere hulpbronnen, zoals sociale steun en vertrouwen, gegenereerd in het werk en privé domeinen tegelijkertijd. Sociale steun kwam van de levenspartner (gezin), vrienden (sociaal) en de zakenpartner (werk). Vertrouwen kwam voort uit levenservaring en het aantal jaren als zelfstandig ondernemer.

Ook belemmeringen waren gerelateerd aan de organisatie context, met name aan de aard van het werk. Ondernemers ervoeren psychologische en emotionele druk, onhandige werktijden en de afhankelijkheid van klanten als belemmerend op hun work-life balance. Ook de positie als kostwinnaar in het gezin en maatschappelijke ontwikkelingen belemmerden een balans. Alle vrouwen ervoeren beperkende overtuigingen en gedachten, zoals perfectionisme en schuldgevoelens, als de grootste belemmering in het vervullen van persoonlijke doelen in werk en privé.

Concluderend toont dit onderzoek aan dat organisatie contextfactoren, zoals de sector, aard van het werk, type onderneming en de werkplek, invloed hebben op de work-life balance ervaring van zelfstandig ondernemers. De organisatie context beïnvloedt het stellen en reflecteren op persoonlijke doelen en de hulpbronnen en belemmeringen die een balans bevorderen of belemmeren. Bevindingen over zelfstandig ondernemers kunnen daarom niet worden gegeneraliseerd. Zelfstandig ondernemen op zichzelf is geen medicijn voor een work-life balance. Het wordt sterk aangeraden om de bijsluiters te lezen en de invloed van organisatie context factoren in oogschouw te nemen.

## Glossary

<b>Autonomy</b>	Freedom to select tasks and to determine the variety of tasks as well as when and where to work.
<b>Blending</b>	When the area around the presupposed border is no longer exclusive of one domain or the other, but blends, creating a borderland.
<b>Border</b>	Line of demarcation between domains, defining a point at which domain-relevant behavior begins or ends.
<b>Border – physical</b>	Defines where domain-relevant behavior takes place
<b>Border – psychological</b>	Rules created by individuals that dictate when thinking patterns, behavior patterns, and emotions are appropriate for one domain but not the other.
<b>Border – temporal</b>	Divide when work is done from where other responsibilities are taken care of.
<b>Border crosser</b>	Individuals who are making frequent transitions between work and other life domain.
<b>Border keeper</b>	Domain member who is especially influential in defining the domains and borders.
<b>Border management</b>	Negotiating about borders and maintaining them in order to keep a work-life balance.
<b>Border strength</b>	Determined by degree of permeability, flexibility, and blending.
<b>Breadwinner</b>	Person who earns a living or the main income for herself and her dependents.
<b>Conflict</b>	Inter-role conflict in which demands of work and family are incompatible in some respect so that participation in one role is more difficult because of participation in the other role.
<b>Demand</b>	Structural or psychological claim associated with role requirements, expectations, and norms to which individuals must respond or adapt by exerting physical or mental effort.
<b>Domain</b>	Worlds that individuals have associated with different rules, patterns, and behavior.
<b>Domain member</b>	Individuals related to a domain, for example the spouse, children, personnel or a business partner.
<b>Facilitation</b>	Form of synergy in which resources from one role enhance participation in the other role.
<b>Flexibility</b>	Extent to which a border may contract or expand, depending on demands of one domain or the other.
<b>Integration</b>	When there is no distinction between what belongs to home and what belongs to work.
<b>Means</b>	Resources which support individuals in fulfilling personal goals.
<b>Organizational sociological perspective</b>	Research approach that studies individuals in relation to their social environment, in this context the organizational settings.
<b>Permeability</b>	Degree to which elements from other domains may enter.
<b>Resource</b>	Structural or psychological assets that may be used to facilitate performance, reduce demands, or generate additional resources.
<b>Segmentation</b>	When domains involve very different intellectual and emotional approaches.
<b>Self-employed</b>	Individuals who maintain economic activity which is outside any relation of subordination, under that individual's own responsibility, and in return for remuneration paid to that individual directly.
<b>Work intensification</b>	Increased effort employees put into their jobs during the time that they are working.
<b>Work-life balance</b>	Satisfaction with fulfilling the personal goals in both the work and life domain, by being able to use appropriate means.

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## Appendices

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- A. Overview of the research participants
- B. Topic list
- C. Code tree
- D. Self-assessment test: Identifying Your Flexstyle

## A. Overview of research participants

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No	Name	Sector	Office location	Bread winner	Type of self-employment	Years being self-employed
1	AS	Training and development	At home	Yes	3 employed	8
2	IS	Personal training and development and trainer	At home	Yes	Business partner, no employed	11
3	LK	Personal training and development and owner training and development network	At home	No	Business partner, no employed	10
4	JW	Spiritual training and development	At home	Yes	Solo	4
5	GD	Training and development mothers working at home	At home	No	Solo	12
6	YB	Training and development for mother looking for balance	At home	No	Solo	1
7	AZ	Two clothes shops	Outside	Yes	6 employed	19
8	EC	Beauty salon, shop, and singing practice	At home	Yes	Life partner, 1 trainee	8
9	CS	Fitness club	At home	No	Business partner (sister); 6 employed	5
10	RB	Yoga school	Outside	No	Solo	6
11	LA	Restaurant and hotel chain	Outside	Yes	Life partner, 60 employed	11
12	IO	Café and resataurant	Outside	Yes	Business partner, 60 employed	2
13	HG	Secretary services	Outside	No	Business partner, no employed	5
14	MFB	Text writing and communication	At home	No	Solo	2
15	IH	Tax consultant	At home	No	Solo	1
16	GB	Recruitment agency	Outside	Yes	2 employed	10
17	TT	Owner online network for self-employed	At home	Yes	Business partner, no employed	2
18	AE	Collection agency	Outside	Yes	Business venture (4 partners), 100 employed	10
19	RB	Midwife	Outside	Yes	Business venture (4 partners)	9
20	CK	Maternity nurse	Outside	No	Solo	5
21	AR	Speech therapist	At home	No	Solo	1
22	HB	Specialized chilccare	At home	Yes	Solo	5
23	AB	Psychiatry	At home	Yes	Business partner, no employed	1
24	RB	General practitioner	Outside	Yes	Business venture (3 partners)	5

### Introductie

- duur
- doel: steeds meer flexibel werken, work-life balance wordt belangrijk. Vrouwen beginnen vaak voor zichzelf om die balans te creëren, maar in de praktijk blijkt dat zij hier verschillende ervaringen mee hebben. Ik wil het vandaag graag over uw ervaring hebben.

### 1. Organisatie

- **wat:** kunt u iets over uw bedrijf vertellen?
- **waar:** op welke locaties werkt u? is er een duidelijke fysieke grens? Of werkt u ook wel eens ergens anders?
- **tijd:** sinds wanneer, hoeveel uur. Spreekt u met uzelf strikte werktijden af of bent u flexibel? Is dat anders als u thuis werkt of op locatie? Welke invloed heeft dat op uw werk-privé balans?
- **waarom:** waarom bent u voor uzelf begonnen? Wat vindt u belangrijk in uw werk? Is dat veranderd? Bent u tevreden?
- **resources:** bent u economisch zelfstandig? €1000,- bruto of €845,- netto per maand.

### 2. Gezin

- **wat:** kunt u iets over uw gezinssituatie vertellen? Hoe heeft u de zorgtaken thuis verdeeld met uw partner?
- **tijd:** is de taakverdeling door de tijd heen veranderd? Reserveert u tijd voor uw gezin? Bent u daar strikt of flexibel in? Hoeveel tijd?
- **waarom:** wat vindt u belangrijk in uw gezinsleven? Bent u tevreden met de situatie?
- **resources:** maakt u gebruik van kinderopvang of een werkster?

### 3. Sociaal leven

- **wat:** hoe ziet uw sociale leven eruit?
- **tijd:** is dat door de tijd heen veranderd? Reserveert u tijd voor uw sociale contacten? Bent u daar strikt of flexibel in? Hoeveel tijd besteedt u aan sociale contacten?
- **waarom:** wat vindt u belangrijk in uw sociale leven? Bent u tevreden?

### 4. Persoonlijk (welzijn en ontwikkeling)

- **wat:** hoe geeft u vorm aan uw persoonlijke leven?
- **tijd:** zijn uw persoonlijke doelen veranderd? Reserveert u tijd voor uw persoonlijke ontwikkeling? Bent u daar strikt of flexibel in? Hoeveel tijd besteedt u aan uzelf?
- **waarom:** wat vindt u belangrijk voor uzelf in uw persoonlijke tijd? Bent u daarmee tevreden?

> Heeft u naast uw werk, gezinsleven, uw sociale en persoonlijke leven nog meer bezigheden waar u tijd of aandacht aan besteedt? Is dit voor u een apart domein?

### 5. Work-life balance( = tevredenheid met het kunnen behalen van doelen in werk en privé)

- Bent u zich bewust van doelen in verschillende domeinen? Inzicht? Monitoren?
- **Hoe** geeft u uw werk-privé balans vorm? Strikte grenzen? Flexibel?
- **Tijd:** Zag u balans er altijd zo uit of is die gedurende de tijd veranderd?
  - **Hoeveel invloed** heeft u zelf op het vormgeven van uw werk-privé balans?
- Hebben **andere personen** ook inspraak op het bepalen van uw doelen? Op het realiseren ervan? Zoals collega's op het werk, gezin, familie, vrienden.
- **Tevredenheid:** Bent u tevreden met het kunnen realiseren van uw doelen? Hoe beïnvloedt dit uw gezondheid? (lichamelijk/ geestelijk)

## 6. Beperkingen en hulpbronnen

- **Eisen:** Wat maakt het moeilijk voor u om uw work-life balance te behouden? Wordt u ergens door beperkt?

Werkeisen: Hoe ervaart u uw werkdruk? Voelt u dat u op uw werk moet voldoen aan bepaalde normen of verwachtingen op uw werk? En privé? Door wie gecreëerd? Welke invloed heeft dat?

- **Hulpbronnen:** Wat helpt u bij het kunnen behalen van uw werk en privé doelen (benoemen)? Maakt u op u werk gebruik van hulpbronnen zoals **vaardigheden**, personen, apparaten, systemen. En privé?

Check: wat is de invloed van

### **werk:**

- personeel/partner
- locatie van het kantoor
- branche waarin u werkt
- uw aantal jaren ervaring als zelfstandig ondernemer
  - Social media

### **Privé:**

- economische situatie
- partner
- kinderen
- sociale netwerk (vrienden, familie, kennissen, persoonlijk welzijn)

## 7. Grenzen

Ik zou het nu graag met u willen hebben over u grenzen stelt en hanteert tussen werk, gezin, sociaal en persoonlijk leven.

- Alles overziend, probeert u deze onderdelen van elkaar gescheiden te houden of integreert u ze met elkaar?

- In hoeverre ervaart u werk en privé als **afgebakende onderdelen** van uw leven?

Werk -> privé. Praat u thuis met uw gezin, vrienden of anderen over uw werk? Gaat u met uw collega's/ klanten ook privé om? Werkt u tijdens vakanties?

Privé -> werk. Praat u op uw werk over uw privé situatie? Mogen de kinderen u storen tijdens het werk? Mogen anderen u bellen/ mailen tijdens het werk? Mogen ze in uw werkruimte komen?

- Wat vindt u hier van? Hoe zou uw ideale afbakening eruit zien?

- Heeft u **afspraken** gemaakt met uzelf of met anderen om uw werk en privé af te bakenen?

### Gedachten en emoties (mental)

- Denkt u tijdens het werk wel eens aan uw gezin, vrienden of persoonlijke zaken? Wanneer? Waar? Neemt u ook emoties van thuis mee naar uw werk?

- Denkt u als u thuis bent wel eens aan uw werk? Wanneer? Waar? Neemt u ook emoties van uw werk mee naar huis?

Werk -> privé. - Als u een slechte dag heeft gehad op het werk, neemt u dat dan mee naar huis?

Privé -> werk. - Stuurt u wel eens email naar vrienden vanaf uw werk? Belt u weleens naar huis? Beïnvloedt dit uw stemming op het werk?

### Physical

Welke **materiele spullen** helpen u om grenzen tussen werk en privé af te bakenen?

- Draagt u thuis en op uw werk andere kleding? Is uw werkplek thuis afgescheiden met een deur of heeft deze een andere inrichting?

- **Gedraagt u zich** tijdens werk en privé ook anders? Wat is het verschil? Wanneer schakelt u over van werk naar privé? En van privé naar werk?

### 8. Afsluiting

-Ten slotte zou ik u willen vragen om een aantal stellingen te beantwoorden om uw flexstyle te bepalen. Bent u tevreden met uw flexstyle?

-Alles overziend, kunt u een cijfer van 0 tot 10 geven voor uw tevredenheid met het behalen van uw doelen in werk en privé?

-Wilt u nog iets toevoegen aan wat u me heeft verteld over uw work-life balance?

-Heeft u kennissen (met kenmerken...) die het leuk zouden vinden om mee te doen aan dit onderzoek?

- Mag ik een foto maken van uw werkomgeving?

-Bedankt voor uw medewerking!

## C. Code Tree

<p><b>Domeinen</b></p> <p>Werk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Werkinhoud <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner</li> <li>Personeel</li> </ul> </li> <li>werklocatie <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kantoor aan huis</li> <li>Kantoor op locatie</li> <li>Afspraken buitenshuis</li> </ul> </li> <li>werktijden <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fulltime werken</li> <li>Parttime werken</li> </ul> </li> <li>werk reistijd</li> <li>werkdoel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Zelfontwikkeling</li> <li>- Succes</li> <li>- Mens contact</li> </ul> </li> <li>Tevredenheid werk</li> </ul> <p>Gezin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gezinssamenstelling</li> <li>Gezinstakverdeling</li> <li>Gezinstijden</li> <li>Gezinsdoel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Zekerheid</li> <li>- Structuur</li> </ul> </li> <li>Tevredenheid gezin</li> </ul> <p>Sociaal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sociaallevens</li> <li>socialtijd</li> <li>Sociaaldoel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support</li> <li>- Inspiratie</li> <li>- Ontspanning</li> </ul> </li> <li>Tevredenheid sociaal</li> </ul> <p>Persoonlijk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persoonlijk leven</li> <li>Persoonlijke tijden</li> <li>Persoonlijke doelen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Zelfontwikkeling</li> <li>- Ontspanning</li> <li>- Inspiratie</li> </ul> </li> <li>Tevredenheid persoonlijk</li> </ul> <p>Familie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tevredenheid familie</li> </ul> <p><b>Work-life balance ervaring</b></p> <p>Bewustzijn</p> <p>Vormgeving</p> <p>Reflectie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Op gevoel</li> <li>Systematisch</li> </ul> <p>Verandering ervaringen</p> <p>Autonomie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- beperkingen autonomie</li> <li>- hulpbronnen autonomie</li> </ul> <p>Invloed andere personen</p>	<p>Tevredenheid balanceren</p> <p>Invloed op gezondheid</p> <p><b>Work conditions</b></p> <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vaardigheden</li> <li>Personen</li> <li>Apparaten</li> <li>Systemen</li> <li>Kantoor aan huis</li> <li>Personeel</li> <li>Partner</li> <li>Sector</li> <li>Ervaring</li> <li>Vertrouwen</li> <li>Social Media</li> </ul> <p>Demands</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personen</li> <li>Personeel</li> <li>Social Media</li> <li>Kostwinnaarschap</li> <li>Economische situatie</li> </ul> <p><b>Life conditions</b></p> <p>Partner</p> <p>Kinderen</p> <p>Sociale contacten</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vrienden</li> <li>Familie</li> <li>Collega's</li> </ul> <p>Huishoudster</p> <p><b>Borders</b></p> <p>Permeability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emoties werk – prive</li> <li>emoties prive – werk</li> <li>gedachten werk - prive</li> <li>gedachten prive - werk</li> </ul> <p>Flexibiliteit</p> <p>Bordercrossers</p> <p>invloed</p> <p>identificatie</p> <p>Gedragsverandering</p> <p>Borderkeepers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner</li> <li>Kinderen</li> <li>Vrienden</li> </ul> <p><b>Bordermanagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other domain awareness</li> <li>Tijds grenzen</li> <li>Ruimtelijke grenzen</li> <li>Fysieke objecten</li> <li>Mentale gewoontes</li> <li>regels en afspraken</li> </ul>
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### Part One: Discerning Your Overall Flexstyle Category

This part of the self-assessment helps you determine whether you're an Integrator, Separator, or Volleyer.

Read each statement. Circle the number indicating how much you agree or disagree with the statement.

Then follow the instructions for calculating and interpreting your results.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	All in all, I try to keep work and personal life separated most of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Except in an emergency, I generally try to take care of personal or family needs at work only when I'm on break or during my lunch hour.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	During my workday, there is very little blurring of boundaries between time spent on work and time spent on personal activities.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	It is clear where my work life goals and my family or personal life begins. In general, I don't take work-related phone calls or e-mails during evenings, weekends, holidays, or vacations.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	I rarely attend to personal or family issues during the workday.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I almost never do extra work after normal work hours.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	In general, I talk as little as possible about my family or personal issues with most people I work with.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	In general, I don't take work-related phone calls or e-mails during evenings, weekends, holidays, or vacations.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I usually handle e-mails related to my family or personal life separately from e-mails related to my work.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	When I'm at home, I rarely think about work, so I can fully get away from my job.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	If I work or ever were to work from home, I would work in a space that is designated for that purpose only.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I do not think about my family, friends, and personal interests when at work, so I can focus.	1	2	3	4	5

13.	With most of my family and friends, I tend not to talk about work issues as I like to keep work separate.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	If I work from home (or were ever to work from home) I make it clear that family and friends should not interrupt me unless it is important to do so.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	If I work from home (or were ever to work from home) I wouldn't handle household or family responsibilities until the workday is finished.	1	2	3	4	5

**Calculating your score:** Add up the total number of circles you placed in each column, and write the totals in the boxes to the right.

Interpreting your score: If you circled "1" and "2" for most of the statements, you are likely a Separator. If you circled "4" or "5" for most of the statements, you are probably an Integrator. If you circled a wide variety of statements, ranging between 1 and 5, you are probably a Volleyer.

**Source:** Kossek, E.E., Lautsch, B.A. (2008). *CEO of Me. Creating a life that works in the flexible job age.* Wharton School Publishing, New Jersey.