Mothers: Their changing role in the family business

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Purpose

• Focus on real life, with a research backing about the changing role.
• What roles? What does past research tell us about this?
• What roles do mothers in family businesses have now?
• What is changing?
The Roles Women Play

- Wife
- Mother
- Stepmother
- Daughter
- Daughter-in-law
- Sister
- Sister-in-Law
- Sole owner?

In the past, what has the role of women been in family businesses?

- Women integrate into the FB in order to help – accidental involvement
- Opportunities to access traditionally masculine industry
- Secretarial, pay clerk or billing clerk functions
- Women work in FB, also outside the FB, and are in charge of sound functioning of the family
- Activity of women is different paid and unpaid tasks.
- Women more likely to take part where business was founded by the husband

(*) Rowe & Hong, 2000; Dumas, 1998, 1992; Rowe & Hong, 2000; Cappuyns, 2007; Lee et al., 2006)
Women as leaders, managers?

- Women are increasingly represented in managerial positions
- Considered as potential successor
- Founders – neglected area of study
- Difficulties in developing managerial careers – underrepresented
- Occupational segregation and stereotypical roles
- Subtle roles
- Non recognition of contribution of women

*(Cromie & O'Sullivan, 1999; Curimbaba, 2002; Dumas, 1992, 1998; Frishkoff & Brown, 1993; Brush, 1992; Cadieux et al., 2002; Cole, 1997; Vera & Dean, 2005).*
Focus of research so far…

• Invisible women
• Role of women in transitions
• Mother as the buffer
Types of Invisibility

• Physical Visibility [ranges from daily presence to complete absence]
• ‘Influence’ Visibility [Family Systems Theory]
• Making the Invisible Visible
  – Assessment
  – Intervention

Gillis-Donovan and Moynihan-Bradt [1990], Martinez-Jimenez [2009]
Roles of women in transitions

• Very little research focused on female involvement in family firms during critical period of generational transition

• Some mention of maternal involvement; however, this is in relation specifically to daughters, and ensuing triangular relationship that emerges between founder, successor (daughter) and mother
Research focus so far…

- Founder
- Daughter
- Mother
Do we need to re-vision the role of mothers in family businesses?

• Considering role of mother as a constructive force during generational transition

• Considering the maternal role as integral to development of transition arrangements
Research focus in future?

- Founder
- Mother
- Son
- Daughter
- Others

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Involvement in the family business

- Previously involved
- Active
- General
- Limited
- No involvement in the business
Mother as ‘buffer’

- Role of buffer between different generations
- Reinforces hidden nature of maternal involvement in familial dynamics
- Result this is a status often unrecognized by family members

The go-between - differences in perceptions

• ‘She [wife] doesn’t get involved with the business too often, sometimes would discuss things with her and she would come to me, but that doesn’t happen now’

• ‘She [mother] doesn’t get involved in the business, there are enough of us involved already!’
• Early on she (wife) helped a lot. She wrote a recipe book and attended exhibitions. Now she has no active involvement in the business, but I discuss products and ideas with her.

• My mother was initially a very strong support to my father, but she has become very ill recently. When we were re-branding the product she went on roadshows to exhibitions, such as The Ideal Home Show, and worked with an advertising agency to produce a cookbook as a way of introducing our ingredients and products.
• Dads says: She [my wife] has an influence. When Sally wants something, she talks to me. I usually give in.

• Yeah, Dad doesn’t mind. It’s more a like habit now. Now very rarely do I use my mum, at first it was a lot. The way me and my dad are now, we really can speak to each other about business matters. It’s not like there’s this barrier like there used to be.
What relevance to advisors?

• Success of mother’s intervention depends on her ‘invisibility’ amongst active family members.

• Advisors need to be aware of this fundamental player when providing help to businesses during transitions and succession.
So one role for mother is as a buffer between family members...

• Is that the sum of their roles?
• What is changing in the family?
• What does the future hold?
The Roles Women Play…+

• Wife
• Mother, Stepmother
• Daughter, Daughter-in-law
• Sister, Sister-in-Law
• Sole owner?

• Grandmother, Step-Grandmother
• Cousin, Step-Cousin
Challenges arising from these?

• Grandmothers – seeing grandchildren if relationships break down
• They are often fearful of losing their grandchildren and break up of family
• Mothers often find themselves in the peacemaker role, the mediator role and are often torn between loyalty to their partner/husband and the kids.
How is the role of the mother changing in the family business?
Changing age of motherhood

• **In 2009** there were 706,248 live births in England and Wales.

• 114,288 of these were to women aged 35-39

• 26,976 births to women over 40, compared to 14,252 births in 1999.

• The birth rate for women aged 40 and over increased fastest, by over 6% from 11.5 per 1,000 women aged 40-44 in 2005, to 12.2 in 2006.
Rise in Mumpreneurs!

1 in 10 mums say starting a business is a dream (BT Business)

- 62 % said choosing hours they work was reason they wanted to start-up
- 50 % wanted a better work/life balance
- 38 % liked the idea of being their own boss
Summary

• Women have power as drivers of economic growth
• Women are choosing to become mothers later in life – what does this mean for FBs?
• A dearth of studies which look at women in family businesses in UK – we need to find out more about the experience of women in family businesses.
• Many research gaps – power; board rooms; theoretical frameworks; generational shifts; changing roles and status; contribution that women in leadership make to performance. No shortage of areas to explore.
• What should we researching?
• Tabitha Potts, mum-of-two and owner of kids clothing site Mimimyne, says:

‘I know many women that are balancing their family life, run their own business and are the major bread winner. The internet has opened up a world of new business possibilities.’

• Of the 128 mothers aspiring to start-up, one-third said they want to run a company from home
The final word from a mother…

The mission statement of my company, Kathy Ireland Worldwide, is to find solutions for families, especially busy moms. I'm reaching out to busy moms because that's what I am. That's what I know, and I know this woman has been underserved.

Kathy Ireland – kathyireland.com

Thank you

Any questions?

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