

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT WOMEN LEADERS DEVELOPING  
SOCIAL ENTERPRISES  
WITHIN NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

by

ANNA LISE CAVOURAS

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## **Abstract**

Social enterprises are an expanding area within the non-profit sector, impacting both service delivery for clients and organizational funding. This qualitative, descriptive study looks at the experiences of women executive directors of non-profit organizations who are running a social enterprise. Through individual interviews, participants were asked about their experiences as a leader, their motivations for developing social enterprises, and the outcomes experienced as a result. Findings were analyzed using a feminist analysis with a focus on the unique experiences of women in the workplace. Results from the interview analysis show that the personal experiences of the participants directly influence their leadership and the direction of organization growth. The motivations behind social enterprises were described either as a practical solution to meet funding objectives, or to provide opportunities for marginalized client groups through training and work experience. In both cases, the overarching aim with generated funds was to improve client service and engage in prevention or activist work with a social justice focus, with a driving motive to improve clients' circumstances. Implications for social work practice are discussed, as are study limitations and suggestions for future research.

## **Preface**

This study was undertaken under the direction and supervision of Dr. Marg Wright, faculty member of the UBC School of Social Work. Anna Cavouras developed the subject of study. Both Dr. Wright and Anna collaboratively decided upon the study design. The execution of the research and analysis of the data was undertaken by Anna. The final manuscript was primarily authored by Anna, with significant editing and input from Dr. Wright.

This research was conducted with approval from the University of British Columbia Behavioral Research Ethics Board. Approval certificate H08 – 02797.

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## CHAPTER 1 Context

### 1.1 Introduction

Throughout my time as a social worker and as a student I have been drawn to the idea of exploring ways to expand and improve systems, moving beyond traditional approaches of working within established ones. My first introduction to this idea came from the story of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh which was started by an economist by the name of Muhammad Yunus who developed a series of ideas and projects that focus on the possibility of using the existing economic system to develop solutions to the social challenges of poverty (Yunus, 2007). His ideas showcased a way of developing a business to benefit communities, as opposed to simply making a company profit, and it changed my view on what was possible. I began thinking in terms of poverty reduction programs in partnership with economic possibilities and the concept of social enterprises crossed my path. Early on in my research, I came across the following quote: “The secret to being as radical as we want to be – and as radical as we need to be – is to finance the revolution ourselves” (Shuman & Fuller, 2005, p.22). From that point forward, I was drawn to the possibilities of social enterprises.

This qualitative study combines several areas of my interest: women as leaders; innovation within the practice of social work; and enacting social justice values.

Qualitative descriptive studies focus on a telling of events through the language of the person who is personally experiencing what is being studied. Through the use of open-ended interviews, descriptive studies seek to unpack the who, what, and where of particular experiences (Sandelowski, 2000). The aim of descriptive studies is to gain

preliminary understanding and to provide descriptive data, especially in areas where little knowledge is available or where issues are newly emerging (Fortune and Reid, 1999).

The stories in this study belong to women executive directors who are running non-profit agencies with a social enterprise. Their stories are told within the context of their leadership of the agencies, many who have founded them or expanded them in new ways. As innovators, feminists, revolutionaries in both the business and social sector, their stories radiate complex themes that expand the possibilities of traditional social work and highlight leaders who truly think in terms of possibilities for systemic change.

Social work is a profession that draws from the work and teachings from a variety of disciplines, and because of this, it has a broad spectrum of knowledge to apply to practice. Of special note is the ability to work across professions and to develop cross-sectoral partnerships. To me, executive directors who are doing this by running a social enterprise illustrate the very essence of this ability. I am fascinated by their vision for their scope of work, their organization, clients and the community beyond. This professional flexibility leads to creative solutions to social problems and allows the exploration of a variety of possibilities, social enterprises among them. As a key component of reflective practice, social workers must examine the questions surrounding this issue and focus on understanding and exploring the role of social work through thoughtful discussion and practice.

This qualitative, descriptive study explores stories of women executive directors and their experiences with social enterprises as part of their non-profit organization. This study has relevance to a variety of arenas: social work, community development, the business sector, government and non-profit policy, and includes meso and macro



implications. At its heart, this study is an examination of a selection of social enterprise programs that have been developed by non-profit organizations. The study strives to further understandings around implementation and development of social enterprises, as well as raising critical issues in establishing social enterprises and the potential outcomes on a community, an organization, and the individuals they serve. By focusing on the leadership role that women are playing in this area, this study will contribute to dialogue about women in management and the role they are playing in shaping communities and workplaces. Through all this, the role of social work is explored within this context.

Social enterprises are at the forefront of discourse around several important themes: the impact of government funding variability on the quality of service delivery; the role of business in social policy and social work; new directions for delivering service to clients; diverse ways to finance and fund non-profit agencies; and the expanding role of business in the community. No matter what the intended purpose or role of the social enterprise is in the community, it is changing the realm of social work and non-profit management. These changes clearly merit closer investigation.

Metro Vancouver is home to a variety of social enterprises that range from thrift stores to café training programs. Social enterprises are part of the dialogue in the non-profit realm and in City Hall. There exist organizations designed to support social enterprise development, through funding and business planning, and the idea is not a new one to hospitals, the Salvation Army, or the British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (BCSPCA). In short, social enterprises are happening in local communities and in the workplaces of social workers.

The context for this study is developed through a detailed definition of social enterprises and the role they are playing internationally and locally. Beginning with a look at social work and the intersections it shares with social enterprises illustrates the relevance of this issue, followed by an examination of the role of women leaders executive directors in this arena. This sets the foundation for a look at the methods of the study and the findings that resulted. The final chapters integrate both the context and the findings for an examination of the implications for social work and subsequent conclusions.

## **1.2 Study Context**

This study seeks to combine two main components in its scope. The first component is social enterprises; however, the second is leadership by women. The topic is focused on the issue of social enterprises, however the women participants are the source for the inquiry. The section that follows outlines the conceptual understandings to situate both within the sphere of social work.

### *1.2.1 The Scope of Social Enterprises*

When discussing *social enterprise* it is important to realize the continuum of configurations that are possible. From a broad perspective it can be described as all activities undertaken in the public interest supported by entrepreneurial strategies; these can range from hospital thrift stores to Girl Guide cookies. Within this definition these strategies may be articulated or realized in a variety of ways, such as community economic development projects, profit generating activities to support organization services or programs, partnerships with multiple sectors, and private sector social

responsibility programs (Gray, Healy & Crofts, 2003). What is created or realized depends on the social entrepreneur, the setting in which they operate, the values employed, and what benefit they hope to achieve. The theme of a double bottom-line recurs frequently in the literature and is used to describe the practice of generating a profit and having elements of social value in the businesses intent or execution (Dart, 2004; Ersing, Loeffler, Tracy & Onu, 2007; Shuman and Fuller, 2006). This ‘social value’ may appear in either the conception or execution of the social enterprise, and may target employees, customers, communities, or organizations. In short, social enterprises are a business directly involved in the production or the selling of goods and services with two purposes: generating income and contributing to a social purpose (Enterprising Non-Profits Program, 2005).

#### *1.2.1.1 Definitions and Local Examples*

Non-profit organizations have increasingly become involved in social enterprises and in general they can be categorized into three groups that vary based on the intent of business and in the style of business they engage in. A range of examples of social enterprises operating within Metro Vancouver are provided in Appendix A. The Enterprising Non-Profits Program (ENP) based in Vancouver, British Columbia is a partnership of funders that supports the development of social enterprises by non-profit organizations. As an organization they act as a funder, an educator, and in the supportive development of social enterprises. Drawing on definitions developed and used by ENP there are three main types of social enterprise: employment development enterprises, mission-based enterprises, and ancillary or asset-based enterprises.

Employment development enterprises are created to provide training opportunities and employment to the client group being served. The goals of this type of enterprise may include permanent, flexible jobs, and competitive wages to those who face barriers to employment elsewhere. This type of enterprise may rely on grants and donations to support their activities and may not achieve complete financial independence. Within Metro Vancouver some examples of this type of social enterprise include: Tradeworks, H.A.V.E. Café, Potluck Café and Catering, Just Beginnings Flowers, Kla-How-Eya Aboriginal Centre Culinary Training Program, Street Youth Job Action, Megaphone Street Newspaper, and Fraserside Moving Company.

Social enterprises that are designed to generate income through the sale of products or services directly linked to an organization are known as mission-based enterprises. Within these enterprises whatever is being sold directly accomplishes the organization's mission through the generation of funds. Examples of this include: organizations that offer counseling services on a sliding scale, such as Family Services of Greater Vancouver or the provision of legal services at PIVOT Legal Society. These services are available to both clients and the general population and the funds generated contribute to providing benefits for the client group being supported.

Finally, social enterprises that are designed to generate revenue for the organization are known as ancillary or asset-based enterprises. These are not likely to be program-based, but may draw on existing competencies or underutilized assets. They may provide services or products that are complementary to the organization's mission and focus on generating revenue to support the organization's work. This is a broad category capturing many styles of social enterprises. Examples of this in Metro

Vancouver include: Battered Women's Support Service fee-for-training program, Salvation Army thrift stores, South Surrey Women's Resource Society Concierge Services.

Some social enterprises fulfill multiple goals and may fall into more than one of the above categories. Primarily, it is the organization that defines what the social enterprise is about and which aspects they deem to be the most important. There are other types of businesses or co-operatives that may be described as social enterprises: co-operatively owned stores, businesses that have a social mandate, organizations that have some public benefit or use language of double or triple bottom line. Examples of this in Metro Vancouver include: the Wood Co-op, Public Dreams Society, Mountain Equipment Co-op, and East End Food Co-op.

#### *1.2.1.2 Legal Implications*

Because non-profit organizations and charities have certain tax privileges and legal responsibilities, a brief overview of these help in understanding how social enterprises can co-exist within an organization's mandate. A social enterprise is a thoughtful and planned response to enhancing an organization's programs, a move towards a more sustainable future, and an opportunity to generate funds in a more diversified way (Enterprising Non-Profits Program, 2005). As this is on the perimeter of the traditional scope of charitable work, as defined by the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA), there are legal matters to consider and understand. Each non-profit organization must consult a lawyer to clarify their responsibilities in maintaining their charitable status. Since the majority of the agencies involved in this study hold charitable status the following section briefly outlines the legal implications.

Non-profit organizations that have charitable status, (as defined by section 149.1 of the *Income Tax Act*), are permitted to operate a business under the guidelines established by the CRA as long as that business is considered “related”, or if most of the staff that run it are volunteers. To determine if the business is related it must be deemed to be both linked to the organization’s charitable purpose, and subordinate to the dominant charitable purpose (Enterprising Non-Profits Program, 2005; Charitable Purpose, Advocacy, and the Income Tax Act, 2006). A description of charitable status, elements for assessing a “related” business, and the factors used to determine the elements of linked and subordinate can be found in Appendix B.

### *1.2.1.3 The Social Enterprise Landscape – Metro Vancouver*

In Metro Vancouver social enterprises play a small but prominent role in the non-profit landscape. Recognized at a local level - as demonstrated by a call for proposals for a social enterprise in the Woodward’s development (*Help Transform a Neighbourhood...*, 2009), and an international one - VANOC and their granting of the contract to produce all the official Olympic bouquets to Just Beginnings Flowers (Guttsman, 2010). They receive consistent media ranging from independent bloggers – *Social Enterprise and the Death of the Welfare State* posted on ClearlySo Social Business Blog (Schwarz, 2011); and mainstream sources – *What Social Enterprises Can Learn from Charities* posted on the Guardian newspapers’ online Social Enterprise Network (Richardson, 2011). Conversations with colleagues reveals that the topic of social enterprises is one that occurs at least occasionally at staff meetings and around the water coolers of many non-profit organizations throughout the city. The existence of supportive organizations such as Enterprising Non-Profits and the support of banking

institutions such as Coast Capital Savings and VanCity indicate that social enterprises are relevant, timely, and credible. Arguably, the global financial crisis of 2008, which saw banks freeze credit and the crashing of stock markets, has brought the issue of social enterprises to the forefront of dialogue around financial sustainability for many organizations as governments limited new spending and cut funding sources for many non-profit organizations.

#### *1.2.1.4 The State of Non-Profit Organizations in British Columbia*

Since the economic downturn in 2008, non-profit organizations in British Columbia have found themselves to be in unsteady times. A 2010 survey entitled *After the Storm: A survey of non-profits and charities in British Columbia*, overseen by the Vancouver Foundation, which in the past four years has given grants to 1030 non-profits and charities, found that of the 575 participating organizations 49% of charities were experiencing a decrease in revenue with an average loss of 18% per organization (Vancouver Foundation, 2010). Small non-profit organizations were disproportionately affected, especially with the reduction of gaming funding; traditionally one of a few sources of multi-year grants. Although some non-profit organizations experienced an increase in revenue, most attributed that to one-time grants or Olympic legacy funding which was short-term. Eighty-two percent of social services agencies and 72% of health agencies interviewed reported an increased demand for services for the second year in a row, and reported “having to do more with less” in the face of reduced revenue and increased costs due to the introduction of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST).

These financial challenges are negatively affecting program delivery, staff morale, and to the long-term viability of many organizations (Vancouver Foundation,

2010). Despite this, many organizations reported in that study that they remain committed to both developing solutions and the relevance of their agencies. The search for solutions to the lack of funding has come to dominate the day-to-day work in the sector with 88% of agencies interviewed actively looking for new revenue sources, and 84% working to increase fundraising. When asked to describe new strategies for meeting revenue shortfalls participants reported the following: sharing of space and models with other agencies; an increased role for the Vancouver Foundation in linking agencies with donors and potential funders; and the development of business models. In terms of business models and the role for social enterprise, the report states, “Organizations are struggling to find alternate sources of funding or revenue although many recognize the need to diversify income sources, improve operations, and pursue new ways of doing business such as social enterprises” (Vancouver Foundation, 2010, p.19).

#### *1.2.1.5 The Social Enterprise Landscape - Worldwide*

In terms of the non-profit sector, the idea of social enterprises is not a new one, but it has enjoyed relatively new interest in North America. Historically, there have been strong points of view that human services were not an arena appropriate for profit making (Gray, et al. 2003). The end of the 1970s was the beginning of an economic shift in North America and governments rebalanced priorities with a renewed focus on the economy. This resulted in human services increasingly involved in for-profit activities and currently there has been a dramatic rise in interest. Non-profit organizations acknowledge current limitations in the funding environment and are seeking a variety of solutions, including business-type activities like social enterprises (Guo, 2006). These changes are reflected locally as demonstrated by the recent research conducted by the



Vancouver Foundation. Social enterprises have recently risen in prominence in discussions about the future of social policy and community services in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the United States (Banerjee, 1998; Ferguson, 2007; Sherraden & Ninancs, 1998). Social enterprises are emerging as an endeavor that can extend options and choices available to social services (Gray, et al. 2003). The social enterprise field has developed quickly in recent years, ranging from mission-based non-profit organizations who wish to generate revenue, to ‘social entrepreneurs’ combining social values in pursuit of establishing a business (Pitcoff, 2004).

Both newly established and long-standing non-profit organizations are being pushed toward a “more productive and entrepreneurial stance” (Anheir & Ben-Ner, 2003, p.27). This shift has assumed different patterns in different countries depending on the role previously played by the third sector, its size, and its relationship with the public welfare system. In North America part of the impact of this shift has resulted in non-profit organizations becoming more market oriented and seeking out a variety of new revenue sources and, in some cases partnerships with for-profit organizations. In Europe, the sector has a different role more focused on public policies and with an advocacy orientation. The result has been stable growth with a focus on work placements and employment programs for marginalized individuals (Anheir & Ben-Ner, 2003; Weisbrod, 1998).

The overall role of non-profit organizations is to fill areas left under-served by government services and programs. Non-profit organizations become increasingly relevant when populations are diverse, resulting in government services that satisfy the majority and may leave many underserved (Weisbrod, 1998). A growth in non-profit

organizations is an indication of the gap between social need and government provisions. The current pursuit of additional revenue by these organizations, beyond usual fundraising activities, through ideas like social enterprises, reflects the pressure to increase program output in the face of increased costs of current services combined with the ongoing retreat of government support (Weisbrod, 1998).

This has clearly been the trend in British Columbia. The ministries in the provincial government that provide the most relevant services to children, youth and families have been forced to cut service provision as their budgets become increasingly insufficient to cover rising costs (First Call, 2010). The 2010 Child Poverty Report Card released by First Call restates many of the themes and issues of the past ten years: BC still has the lowest minimum wage in Canada; there lacks a province-wide poverty reduction plan despite repeated calls from municipalities and advocacy groups; BC's child poverty rate remains extremely high during both strong and weak economic times. There is clear evidence from researchers, service providers, and families alike that low-income people in BC are falling further behind financially and subsequently, socially. The social costs of poverty go beyond debt and making crucial choices over food and rent, they include anxiety, rising health problems and costs, working long hours, and resulting in little time for family or community interactions (Cohen, Klein & Richardson, 2010).

This is the realm within which social workers practice and this is the climate within which they are operating. The “do more with less” mantra is not a new one, but agencies are expanding and growing in new ways. New things are being tried in organizations in an era of changed funding and economic realities. Social enterprises are

a part of this and will continue to develop in the area of social work practice. Non-profit organizations are among the key employers of social workers and are the workplaces of both colleagues and friends. Social work research and values have a role to play in the development of the social enterprise landscape.

This issue is not without its critics. The main role for social workers is to become an informed and educated group on the issue in order to meet social justice goals with individuals and communities by employing as many practical tools and resources as possible. In view of the state of non-profit organizations in British Columbia, the increasing number of organizations embarking on social enterprises, and the impact this has on social work, social enterprises have demonstrated to be a timely issue worthy of consideration.

### *1.2.2 Women Leaders: Stories of Difference and Innovation*

The road traveled by women managers is often an uncertain and solitary one. They have little access to social support networks because men keep them out of their own, which are allegedly based on shared affinities created outside the workplace. (Kaufmann, 2008, p.xiii).

The second key component in setting the context for this study is the role of women leaders. Examining women's leadership in social enterprise development has some key intersections that merit closer investigation. When designing this research, the themes of women in work and management resonated with my personal goals and interest in this study. Wanting to explore that further, the experiences of women who run non-profit organizations with social enterprises seemed a logical extension that filled my research interests and a research gap identified in the literature.

The term 'innovative' in this context can be defined as “approaches to managing and change which facilitate shared practices, collaborative cultures and improve working relationships” (Maddock, 1999, p. 10). Since women are more likely to be managers in the public sector than in the private sector (Pynes, 2000), this skill set and challenges are predominantly those of women non-profit leaders. These women, through experience and vision, create innovative responses to a complex environment. There is new interest in management studies around organizational forms that encourage partnerships, learning, and change. Innovation is being attached to this field of study as social relations are being seen as key areas for progressive change (Maddock, 1999). Research is showing that women non-profit managers appear to have a strategic approach to change both within and beyond their organizations, often focused on challenging structural and management frameworks.

In the end, however, it comes back to us, as individuals. Individuals, working in unison, form and shape societies. Social commitments are commitments of individuals. Great social forces, Robert Kennedy powerfully reminded us, are the mere accumulation of individual actions. (Sachs, 2006, p.367).

The concept of individuals shaping societies is what I see this research as being about. Women managers are documented as having unique approaches to handling the elements of running a business and a non-profit organization (Kaufmann, 2008), yet behind each woman executive director is a dynamic story of the experiences that brought her to this point. Characteristics that contribute to the defining features of women leaders include: an ability to handle diversity, ambiguity, and change; a capacity to be critically aware and capable of trusting others; a desire to develop a collaborative culture; and an awareness of diversity and gender cultures (Maddock, 1999). Women who are leading

non-profit organizations are in the position to shape societies through their innovative approaches to non-profit service delivery, and their stories have tremendous individual and collective value.

#### *1.2.2.1 Enacting Social Justice*

New paradigms for organizations and thinking are developed on the margins – not by the establishments. Change agents are on the margins of the western world, corporations, and the formal and male establishments (Maddock, 1999, p. 8).

Women in public sector management positions want to transform public sector organizations through open relationships with service users, internal democracy, and an injection of social values into this practice. Women innovators are often challenging norms and pushing for a re-evaluation of how things are done in agencies and may advocate for changes in management style, practices and measures (Maddock, 1999).

This drive for transformation leads social entrepreneurs to emerge as agents of change, which can lead to a powerful expression of social justice values:

Sociologists that focus on societal issues have started to consider the relations between business and society and what is needed to reduce fragmentation and begin to knit the frayed structure of society together. This thinking suggests that theories about entrepreneurs as agents of change and the creation of social as well as material value should enter our theories of entrepreneurship (Chell, 2007, p.7).

A growth of social enterprises illustrates a surge in socially responsible businesses and a new interest, perhaps out of necessity, among non-profit organizations working to focus on sustainable solutions beyond the day-to-day repair of social ills.

The review of the social enterprise landscape from both a global and local perspective, in partnership with an introduction to the theories of social justice and women's leadership, helps define the contextual issues surrounding participants' stories.

The following *Methods* chapter details the methods and theoretical approach used in this study.

## CHAPTER 2 Methods

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the methods used to conduct this research. Feminist research methodology is introduced, followed by the sampling process, the data collection design, and methods used for data analysis. A rationale is provided explaining their choice, and validity issues are addressed.

### 2.1 Study Design

#### 2.1.1 *Feminist Research Methodology*

The purpose and strength of this study is in the valuing of women's lived experiences, a core component of a feminist research methodology (King, 1994; Mies 1990). The goal of feminist research, as defined by Campbell and Wasco, is described as capturing "women's lived experiences in a respectful manner that legitimates women's voices as sources of knowledge. In other words, the process of research is of as much importance as the outcome." (as cited in Deutsch, 2004, p.888). Feminist research acknowledges that women's lives have not been reflected or understood by traditional research (Deutsch, 2004). This acknowledgement made a lot of sense to me when I was designing this study and I found myself drawn to the idea of telling stories of women in leadership. There are women in leadership in social work and in the social service sector as a whole. This didn't alone fulfill my interest. Farenthold and Mayes describe the pursuit of social change as being tied to the emotional and societal roles held by women (as cited in Hyde, 1989). I wanted to know what lived experiences - both personal and professional - women had that motivated them to explore new areas within the sector;

what drove them to innovate. For this study I used the term ‘innovative’ in this context as “approaches to managing and change which facilitate shared practices, collaborative cultures and improve working relationships” (Maddock, 1999, p. 10). Feminist research makes room for those experiences and values them as sources as authoritative as any other in the academic realm (Smith, 1989). I wanted to experience that process for the participants and myself.

### 2.1.2 *Agency Theory*

As a complement to a feminist research approach, I drew on the basics of agency theory to explore the finding of *Purposeful Choice* in the *Discussion* chapter. The concept of agency is a way of conceptualizing the individual and her relationship to society. It recognizes that conditions are not inevitable but the result of individual behaviour and decision-making, therefore making it subject to change. Drawing on notions of resilience, adaptability, and resourcefulness, agency theory offers a constructive and optimistic approach to practicing social work (Jeffery, 2011). In combination with feminist theory, this approach offers a practical and relevant lens in which to explore the attitudes and beliefs of the participants as they seek to affect individual and systemic change through their non-profit organizations.

### 2.1.3 *A Qualitative Descriptive Study*

This qualitative study is descriptive in its approach with the intent to detail the phenomenon of women social entrepreneurs in the non-profit realm. Descriptive studies provide “rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are unexplored in the literature” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p.33). Because the area of social enterprise is diverse and



currently expanding rapidly, there is much room for descriptive studies to fill in many of the research gaps. The aim of this study is to gain preliminary understanding and provide descriptive data in an area where little is known (Fortune & Reid, 1999). Women's experiences are underrepresented in all fields of research (Smith, 1989) and this study seeks to add some "thick description" (Fortune & Reid, 1999, p.107) and to tell in-depth stories of their experiences. Documenting and describing the experiences of the participants provides focused data on their actions, beliefs, attitudes, and processes occurring in their lives. These are the core components of a qualitative, descriptive study and key elements in a feminist research agenda (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Qualitative descriptive studies are among the most common in social work and are important in generating social work knowledge (Fortune & Reid, 1999). This is further in accordance with feminist theory, which is described as able to be used by anyone to challenge, counteract, or change a status quo which disadvantages women (Chafetz, 1988 cited in Alvesson & Due Billing, 1997).

## **2.2 Data Collection**

### *2.2.1 Sampling*

Sampling for this study was purposeful and targeted at women executive directors who are leading a non-profit organization with a social enterprise. To be eligible the organizations represented in the study had to have a mandate that aligns with the values and purpose of social work.

### 2.2.2 *Participants*

Inclusion criteria for this study were as follows:

- Be a female executive director of a non-profit organization that has a social enterprise
- Be willing to participate in the study and consent to be interviewed
- Be willing to share information and experiences related to the social enterprise
- Be within the Metro Vancouver area
- Be over the age of 19
- Be able to provide voluntary, informed consent

Recruitment of participants was conducted through three avenues: an email flyer sent through social work list-serves, a study flyer was forwarded to agencies of social service agencies that were known to be engaged in social enterprises, and third-party recruiters were used. Social workers who were known to me were asked to distribute information about this study to executive directors they may know and who fit the study criteria.

### 2.2.3 *Interviews*

After determining eligibility, interviews were conducted at a location of the participants choosing, or over the phone. All participants signed a consent form with information about the study and were given a copy for their records. Interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's permission and transcribed. All interviewees received a copy of their interview and were invited to make any additions or changes that they wished.

#### 2.2.4 *Memos and Observations*

Throughout the research process, I kept researcher memos when thoughts or questions came in to my mind. Because I recognized the importance of keeping notes as a key data source in order to process my impressions and interpretations, described as “one of the most important techniques you have for developing your own ideas” (Maxwell, 2005, p.12). Where appropriate, I made visits to the social enterprise to observe the operations. I reviewed the agencies websites and related media coverage available on the web.

### **2.3 Data Analysis**

Throughout the transcription process, I made separate memos on comments or ideas that stood out for me, with a special focus on things that seemed to be repeated through the interviews. All transcripts were stored on a computer with a locked password. Each transcript was assigned a number and each participant was given an alias for identification purposes. Each line of each transcript was numbered to facilitate analysis and categorization.

After transcription, I read each interview in its entirety multiple times in an effort to get a sense of the entire interview before going through the transcript line-by-line and making notes in the right-hand margin of the essence of the line or sentence. As I was reading each transcript, I would note anything that stood out as important, anything that the participant spoke at length about, or that seemed to hold particular interest for them. Then, I would go through the next interview and if anything fell in to the same categories I made a note. If not, I added a new category to the list. Following the analysis process for qualitative research, I then began to form major organizing ideas that became initial

categories for interview quotes based on the words and language used by participants. These categories evolved, after repeated readings and re-organization and in vivo codes emerged to form themes (Cresswell, 2007). This process was very fluid and the categories were constantly changing. When I had approximately twenty categories that seemed to sum up all the major ideas that had come from the interviews, I went through each interview looking for quotes that spoke to that idea. I copied and pasted quotes from the interviews under each idea. If a particularly important quote did not fit in to an existing category, I set it aside with some notes in my memos about how it seemed relevant or what I saw within those words.

### *2.3.1 Ethical and Validity Issues*

The subject matter of this study and the targeted participants are both considered low risk and informed consent was not a concern. In keeping with ethical practice, all participants were informed of their rights when they agreed to participate in the study, at the time of their interview, and in writing. All participants received a copy of their transcript and have the right to edit or revoke it if they so choose. All participants were reminded at the time of the interview that their confidentiality was at risk due to the small sample that exists. Social enterprises run by women executive directors of non-profit organizations that meet the study criteria are not in abundance within the defined study parameters of the Metro Vancouver area.

As described above, validity threats were minimized through the use of member checking of transcripts and the use of researcher memos. In addition, noting the process of analysis enhances the transparency of the study. The nature of this qualitative, descriptive study is to focus on rich data to explore the phenomenon of social enterprises

and expand knowledge the role that women executive directors are playing in this area. I have made every attempt to be reflexive throughout this process, documenting decisions and assumptions that I have made along the way. This personal connection to the research has ensured a meaningful and ethical journey throughout this process.

The following *Findings* chapter explores the stories drawn from the transcriptions and offers quotes and examples from the participants' interviews.

## **CHAPTER 3 Findings**

This chapter outlines the findings and themes that emerged from this study. The first section focuses on the participants and introduces each woman and her organization's social enterprise. The second section contains stories of the women's experiences with problem solving, their leadership philosophy, and their thoughts on the origins of these approaches. The third section explores the social enterprise in-depth and the motivations that participants had in launching or expanding them. Finally, in the fourth section outcomes of the social enterprise are described, ranging from individual clients to changes in the community.

### **3.1 Participant Introductions**

The development and execution of a social enterprise has been described as an innovative response to various challenges in the non-profit sector (Guo, 2006; Gray, et al., 2003), and since not every organization does it, who these organization leaders are and where they come from is integral to setting the context for unpacking the themes in this study. By beginning with the women themselves, their self-identity, and their leadership approach as executive directors, I feel it opens the door to understanding elements of the circumstances that led them to social enterprises as an option for their organization. This idea of the social entrepreneur having a personal connection to their enterprise was expressed in the theories of Schumpeter, who in 1934 stated the following: "An entrepreneur is an individual with a specific attitude towards change" (as cited by Anheir & Ben-Ner, 2003, p.141). These theories laid the early foundation for exploring

the motives behind entrepreneurial behaviour, closely linking it to the personality of the person. Since the women themselves are the vehicle for exploring the concept of social enterprises in this study, it is through the telling of these experiences that an emerging picture of these women begins to unfold. The use of women's lived experiences forms part of a powerful narrative and is a key element of a feminist research agenda (Bernhard, 1984 as cited by Webb, 1993).

Over a period of eight months, I met with seven unique women who each lead a non-profit organization that has a social enterprise. The women who participated are the catalyst for understanding social enterprises in this study and I begin with an introduction of each. Some organizations have more than one social enterprise, the ones I have listed beside each person's pseudonym is the one that either they spoke extensively about or is the most prominent one for their organization. Others are listed within the participant's introduction.

### *3.1.1 Jen – Social Enterprise: Management Company*

I met Jen in the staff kitchen where she runs a women's anti-violence organization with a variety of programs that have evolved and expanded over the organizations' history. Having a personal connection to the women's anti-violence movement led her initially to volunteering on the board of directors. Over time and as a result of multiple organizational changes and an unsuccessful recruitment campaign within the organization, Jen was approached by the board and interviewed for the position of executive director. She describes her transition: "It wasn't sort of a career plan. I didn't think about it. It happened by circumstance". When she became the executive director the organization was in considerable flux requiring the resolution of numerous staff and

program challenges. With a cup of tea in hand, Jen described how focusing on community work, and responding to the needs of the women coming through the door became the fundamentals of her leadership approach. This meant making crucial and innovative changes to programs that reflected client realities while respectfully responding to women's experiences of violence. Over time the organization developed a social enterprise in the pursuit of "buckets and buckets of money" and opened a management company as an alternative to a traditional fundraising campaign. She has now been the executive director for 19 years. Her professional education was in sociology and journalism and early in her career she worked with a small communications firm. This experience taught her some of the basics of running a business. She describes her shift to volunteering at a non-profit organization, eventually leading her to assuming the role of executive director at the same organization.

Um, decided at that point, I was kind of mature enough at that time that I started to think about wanting to do or wanting to contribute, or do something. Um, and wanted to do something that was meaningful to me because of my own life experience. And applied to be on the board of directors of [organization name]...

Jen remains a passionate advocate for the women's anti-violence movement and approaches social enterprises with a reflective stance. As the leader of an organization that has had a social enterprise for 10 years, she is often asked to speak on the subject. Her response is consistent and passionate, with a belief that her organization should be fully funded by the government. Facing the reality that government funding isn't sufficient, she sees her social enterprise as an option to meet her organization's needs. Jen is a practical woman, a leader in both the world of non-profit organizations and social enterprises, and a thoughtful individual seeking solutions to the presenting problems of



funding shortages. Her organization also runs a painting company that employs and trains clients in the trade.

### *3.1.2 Jane – Social Enterprise: Thrift Stores*

An executive director of a women’s anti-violence organization, Jane came in to the position at the request of the board of directors. As a long-time women’s advocate with a passion for anti-violence work, her first task as executive director was to guide the organization from a collective to a hierarchical organization. She describes joining the organization: “Ahhhh...[the organization] was undergoing a transformation from a feminist collective to unionized hierarchy and I was invited by the board of directors at that time to facilitate that transition...and to negotiate the first collective agreement.” The initial social enterprise was a fee-for-service training program for other female staff working in the anti-violence sector. This social enterprise had been successful from the beginning. When Jane assumed the position of executive director the organization had one operational thrift store that was in disarray. Under her leadership the thrift store grew and prospered in the community and was followed by the opening of another location. Both of these social enterprise ventures are seen as integral to the organizations’ mission and a key cornerstone of their operations and philosophy. Jane describes the role that the stores play in connecting community members to their organization and to the issue of violence against women, as well as contributing directly to operating costs.

Her position on social enterprises stems from what she describes as an “intuitive understanding” that social enterprises “work”. This intuition, she said comes from the collective wisdom of the experience and thoughts of staff, volunteers, and clients from her organization. The social enterprise helps her organization meet many of their

philosophical and practical goals, from generating revenue to providing a work opportunity for marginalized women to gain leadership experience. Because of the social enterprise, Jane spoke about the opportunities for advocacy and independent revenue, allowing staff to attend conferences and engage in social justice work driven by the organization's vision.

### *3.1.3 Heidi – Social Enterprise: Café and Catering Business*

Over fries and chicken strips in the busy café, I met Heidi the executive director for a community café and training organization. Coming to her position with a background in business, Heidi puts the business model as a priority in the running of the non-profit organization. This approach does not detract from the role of social justice strongly advocated by herself, the board, and the organization as a whole. Providing kitchen training for community members and serving thousands of free meals, the social enterprise café is integral to the neighbourhood and creates jobs and access to affordable meals. A catering business brings in revenue to support many of the other programs that the organization prioritizes. Because of a personal interest in social justice, this social enterprise drew Heidi initially to become involved as a volunteer helping to develop the business plan. She became linked through her role in the business community:

So when I worked in conventional business, the CEO of that company connected me with BC Social Ventures and I met with their executive director on things I was interested in. I was on a fact-finding mission on how I could broach business and community in a positive way. And that was a good fit for the kinds of things I could do. So I met with her and I said to her that I wouldn't mind doing some volunteer work if they had any available. So she put it out there with my resume to social enterprises and non-profits they were granting to, and set up a meeting. So [organization name] jumped. And said we're doing a business plan. My background is marketing. We need some marketing support on this business plan – could this person do that? So I said, yes I could.

This advisory role in the business plan eventually led her to the role of executive director. With an important role in the dialogue around food security in the neighbourhood, Heidi describes the organization as an example of “demonstrating how things can be done. Where you can run a business, and also improve your community, and also add to the revitalization of a neighbourhood.”

Describing herself as a social entrepreneur, Heidi views the role of the café as a key part of community economic development in this low-income neighbourhood. She described her leadership approach as one that involves sharing power and respecting what each person brings to the table. Her team is comprised of people from mixed backgrounds with a variety of professional and personal skills. A strong believer in working for what you need, Heidi’s philosophy is “hard work can do good things” and she exemplifies her beliefs. Her role has grown to include a series of partnerships in her community committed to improving access to safe and nutritious food, and in nurturing the sustainable growth of the neighbourhood.

#### *3.1.4 Eleanor – Social Enterprise: Recycling Business*

Eleanor oversees a large organization that supports individuals with disabilities and runs multiple social enterprises with different goals. A long time advocate for the possibilities of social enterprises, Eleanor eagerly spoke about the successes and challenges experienced at her organization. Her leadership clearly drives this organization and fosters a “spirit of social enterprise” as she describes it. Eleanor has a background in psychology and came to the organization in the early 1990s. Her organization runs a variety of different types of social enterprises that meet different needs: income generation for the organization, employment opportunities for the

organization's clients, and the development of technology to enhance client progress – a social enterprise that both generates income and fills a need to support clients and the staff who work with them. Having been involved with social enterprise projects for a long time, Eleanor has an in-depth understanding of running, sustaining, and closing these types of businesses. She is actively involved in sharing her knowledge with others who are looking to learn about social enterprises, and she advocates legislative and policy changes that will foster a healthier environment for small businesses being run by non-profit organizations. Her leadership approach is rooted in helping her staff take risks and grow in new directions. As executive director for the past 13 years, she is extremely loyal to her staff and encourages them to try new things. This spirit of growth and innovation is the cornerstone of her leadership of staff and with the development and vision of the organization.

### *3.1.5 Sarah – Social Enterprise: Café and Cooking School*

Running a café and cooking school, Sarah is a professional chef by training. She came to be executive director because of her previous experience working with street youth in a similar cooking training program. This café seeks to give employment skills and opportunities to individuals living in poverty, dealing with addictions, or who haven't been successful in traditional training or employment opportunities. The social enterprise is the café where students work and serve guests while learning the trade. Sarah brings heart and passion to her work with her students and shares her love of cooking. Her focus is on maintaining relationships with students and in standing by them as they face challenges in their lives. The program supports students emotionally and practically, providing everything from Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous meetings to bus tickets, and

stays away from traditional ‘three strikes you’re out’ approach. Sarah welcomes students to take as much time as they need to complete the program and has a real focus on their well being: “I think of just helping people get on their feet. Helping the community. Making it stronger.” When I asked about how she got drawn in to cooking, she told me about the first time she decided she no longer wanted to eat at McDonalds. She had her mother (a woman who didn’t enjoy cooking) drive her to the grocery store and Sarah did the grocery shopping. She bought a roast and had to call her grandmother to ask her how to cook it, ending up with a very dry roast.

So I thought okay, this is good, but we need a bit of gravy. So dry! And kind of worked it from there. And that’s how it all started. But it grabbed me. I loved cooking. From the first time I thought ohhhh, this is what I want to do. So I knew right away that this is what I wanted. And I...it was fun. And you get to play. And you get to sample everything that you worked so hard on. And you get to share. Share! And it looks so beautiful. You think it’s so beautiful that you don’t even want to eat it. You know, there’s a lot to it. It’s beautiful and it’s artsy and it gives you a lot. Definitely.

Her approach to social enterprise is based in what works for the students and in learning along the way. Having community support is key to the success of the café and the training program is funded through its revenue, the support of donors, and re-training grants. As the customer base continues to grow for both breakfast and lunch, Sarah’s faith is in the food making her program financial sustainable so that more students can come through the doors.

### *3.1.6 Corrine – Social Enterprise: Thrift Stores*

With a Masters in Social Work, Corrine described herself as the “reluctant ED” as she, like many of the others, was recruited directly for the position despite her plan to retire. She described the experience:

But then this organization...approached me about their model and asked if I was interested in interviewing for the position of executive director. And, um, at that point in time I honestly wasn't interested. And, but it intrigued...the model of care intrigued me. [Pause]. And I have always been a strong advocate of the system in the province looking at itself in terms of, are there new ways, are there different ways of taking care of kids that are in care – working with bio families, working with foster families, building up resilience, so there was aspects of the model that intrigued me.

The organization runs programs for children in care and expanded thrift stores as social enterprises under Corrine's leadership. The purpose of these was to bring in a source of discretionary income for the organization, where she knew that "everyday there are funds coming in the door". This direct infusion of cash was the motivation behind the thrift stores and it helps the organization to meet costs not covered by their small government contracts and private donations. Her interview was unique compared to the others in that Corrine was the only social worker among the participants. She described herself as a "builder" and was a strong advocate for social workers thinking beyond the systems they work within. She spoke frankly of the challenges of learning about business, but emphasized that social workers bring a lot of skills to the management of non-profit organizations and social enterprises. Because her organization has few government contracts, she described this as an opportunity to learn how to do without them. With minimal government support, she describes this challenge as a contributing factor to their resiliency in the face of government cutbacks throughout the non-profit sector.

### *3.1.7 Grace – Social Enterprise: Flower Shop and School*

Combining a flower school with a retail space, Grace runs an organization that supports people with barriers to learn skills and then apply them in the flower shop. With a long history as a florist, Grace started the social enterprise so that students receive on

the job training and as a revenue source to cover education costs. Grace presents an ingrained understanding of social justice issues and is a vehement advocate for people who have been involved with the criminal justice system, particularly women. Her passion in this area began as a floristry teacher when she had two women enter her program who were on parole. This inspired her to go beyond two students, eventually developing a program within a women's prison.

That's many, many years ago. And that stayed with me all those years. It kind of stuck with me and when I was sitting there I thought, there's got to be people like that, that I can teach – that need it, eh? So I thought why not a jail?

Her perseverance led to the establishment of a florist training program in a jail and an associated flower shop. The women she worked with went on to win floristry design awards and most are still in the industry. Her belief in second chances is at the root of her leadership of the store and flower school she now runs in the community.

Not everybody wants to support women like that. Isn't that a shame? You know, don't they...what does it matter what they did? It's about the journey that they are taking and the path they are on now, not what they did to get there.

The flower store social enterprise is designed to support the school and the students who want to attend. Applications exceed the amount of funding available through other sources, and Grace is determined not to turn students away. The store is continually building a broader customer base and has received local, national, and international media coverage for its unique approach. Grace views it all with a practical approach that focuses on creating employment options for marginalized women.

### **3.2 The Women: Stories of Innovation, Unique Nature, and Leadership**

By placing these women at the centre of their experiences and in drawing out stories of their work life and leadership experience, this group of findings gives insight in to who these women are, both professionally and personally. This is consistent with the fundamentals of feminist research, which gives priority to female experiences as the cornerstone of understanding social outcomes (Webb, 1993). These unique experiences expand the knowledge that exists around who is developing social enterprises and what some of their motivations may be. This section describes the personal experiences and reflections on those experiences that the participants shared with me.

The first set of quotes explores the women's work experience through detailing scenarios where they examined a program or a situation and sought to make useful changes. From the minute operational detail to the macro visioning of their organizations, the executive directors shared stories that illustrate a continuous pattern of enacting social justice values through programming and policy directives. Setting these women apart as leaders was their commitment to action towards developing solutions on a range of challenges ranging from adjusting policies for transition houses to developing sustainable programs for community food security.

The second series of quotes illustrates the way the women described themselves when asked what motivated them to develop new programs or make changes to existing ones (such as those detailed in the previous section). The language they used described innate elements, almost as though they were born with that ability and brought forward interesting metaphors about their thoughts on who else would be drawn to this type of work.



For the third section, I asked the women about the logistics of the two roles of being executive director and running a social enterprise. This led to stories about their philosophy and approach in leadership, often centered around a willingness to share power, and to grow and learn within the position. These are further explored in the fourth and fifth sections on leadership and the willingness to solve problems.

All the women interviewed related stories of their journey to becoming executive directors and all illustrated stories of connecting personal and work experiences with their approach to leadership. Their work histories demonstrated an insight in to community needs and the ability to connect those needs to program changes. This pattern of creativity laid the basics of a foundation for incorporating social enterprises in to their future organizations and in linking the business with the community and their social causes. Research is showing that women non-profit managers appear to have a strategic approach to change both within and beyond their organizations, often focused on challenging structural and management frameworks (Maddock, 1999).

### *3.2.1 Patterns of Uncovering Gaps and Developing Innovative Solutions*

The leadership of all participants was highlighted by their willingness to make changes to improve service and their agencies. All of the women had stories of looking at gaps that were not meeting community needs and addressing them through new approaches. Since all work with marginalized populations - either women living with violence, people with addictions, people with disabilities, or those living in poverty – many changes involved a different way of supporting these groups to access services. All expressed strong opinions about identifying client needs and their motivation to make changes to address this. Some of these changes required a more creative approach than

had previously been applied to these circumstances. Defined as “something new or different introduced” (Innovation, 2009), innovation has been a key component in the expansion and development of each social enterprise created by these women. A term that is not common within the profession of social work, in this set of findings I have used it to include work being done that expands the realm of the profession, includes cross-sectoral partnerships, and in the development of programs beyond traditional approaches. Innovation involves the drawing in of economic, social and political activities with a variety of institutions and agencies (Sen, 1999). From expanding access terms to programs to developing social enterprises, innovation was a common theme across the work stories of the participants.

These women voiced a sense of determination and strength as they felt in control of the organizations’ programs and their ability to develop what was needed or what was missing, in order to meet community needs they had identified through their contact with the community. This responsiveness was described in powerful terms around program development.

This is a purposeful choice to do this. Because I actually like what it brings you in terms of the freedom and independence to do what is necessary to meet the needs of community as opposed to what funding is available.

So that is why I designed that program – this program because I thought that I could make sure they continue on and at least get work and not fall through the cracks and come back.

One woman described the constraints applied on access terms to a transition house within her organization that became immediately apparent upon her assuming leadership. She went about making changes to this policy, which resulted in lifting

barriers to access. This was recognized as a progressive move throughout the transition house community and remains unique in this regard.

...my first year there...when I started they screened for alcohol and drug use. They screened for mental health issues. If you had any 'issues', and I say that in quotes because that is the language we used at the time, um, you weren't able to come to [house name]...And, which made absolutely no sense to me...

Another strongly voiced her organization's role in addressing the needs of women based solely on the fact that there was a need for such services. The lack of supports for women living with violence was the key to her organization's existence and filling that need was of paramount importance. The fact that women experience violence is the reason for the existence of the organization and illustrates a strong, independent set of values that prioritizes responding to community need.

We exist to end violence against women. And, so if we exist to end violence against women – we only exist because women are hurt and women experience oppression in society. That's it. And we don't exist because of any government. We don't exist for any other reason.

Because many of their experiences were in the creation of solutions, many of the women were doing things by their own rules or in a unique way. This woman decided that she would welcome people back who needed multiple opportunities. Her open door policy resulted in clients returning to complete her employment program.

You know that three strikes you're out rule doesn't apply here and they know that so they keep coming back.

Stories of learning on the job and in throwing aside standard approaches came from these women. A belief in the work they were doing and in serving the client group was the most important element.

So I started work crews. I started getting people jobs. You know, you do make a lot of mistakes and I learned along the way, but nobody else know

that I was even learning anything because they didn't even know that this was a mistake!

This woman presented the challenges of developing programs that were not recognized by the government. As an organization they were a newcomer and had to establish their credibility and develop meaningful programs that contributed to child protective services in order to be recognized. Because of her belief in this model of care for children, this organization was willing to work and struggle to have the opportunity to prove themselves.

Yeah, it offers us the most independence but it is also because we represent a model that is not accepted by the Ministry [Ministry of Child and Family Development]. Right? So the Ministry is notorious for only seeing how child welfare should be done in this province through a certain lens. They are notorious for supporting organizations that have had long time associations with them where they've been well established over the past 30-40 years. All right? So when you have another entity coming in and saying 'hey, this is the possibility of doing it in a different way'.... There is lots of resistance. So what choice do you have? You believe in the model. You believe in the cause...Not only are you battling against the financial bottom line. You are battling against a mindset, you know, in government that doesn't shift.

### 3.2.2 *Being 'Wired' This Way*

During the interviews, I asked about what motivated each woman to run a social enterprise, in an effort to understand what about them gave them this idea or determination. Some of them directly said that they were driven; that it came from something inside of them, a natural impulse that was part of who they are. The implication for them was that it takes a certain kind of person to run a social enterprise, just as not everyone is an entrepreneur. There was a clear acknowledgement that it was difficult, although the difficulties depended on the participant. This woman described the

long hours and the stress involved, yet described herself as built to withstand this kind of pressure.

So you know I worked 60 and 70 hours a week for 2 or 3 years, between the two jobs just to [Pause]. I'm kind of built that way anyway but I had this extra responsibility and also the responsibility was enormous because I had borrowed this money and put the non-profit in debt. And felt incredibly obligated to make it work...Um, you know not everybody is built for that.

These women spoke more of a natural inclination rooted in their values. They specifically addressed the desire to build or create things for themselves and their organization. There was a clear recognition of the role of themselves in the development of their organizations.

It's kind of natural – that's how my values are wired and I've been raised to think that hard work is the way you get better things for yourself and others. Instead of expecting the world on a silver platter. So I bring that kind of mindset and value system.

But you know, I'm a builder and when you are a builder – you build and you put your hands to whatever needs to be done in order to build to that next stage of development, and um, you learn along the way.

Well, I mean, I think what is part of my personality is to do self-education and to learn and grow.

Other women indicated a philosophical inclination towards developing social enterprises and identified them as a practical solution to what needed doing. These quotes correspond directly to the above section as women described the need to do what needed to be done, and often to make changes or innovate as required.

I'm very much of the belief that if the government isn't going to fund you than that doesn't mean you stop doing what you are doing. So this poses a problem with others in the non-profit and social enterprise community, because there are some people who believe that if you go and raise money and pay for itself then you are letting the government off the hook. And so I get very frustrated because are you just going to sit there and wait for the government to give you money and tell you what to do? Or are you going

to go and display some initiative and at least try to see what you can do without the government, you know?

Um you know it's funny because coming in to this, I mean really coming in to this, I don't think like a lot of people think. I don't care about little things. I just, I have a philosophy that if we need it, it will come.

It's astonishing when I see it mapped out, while at the same time intuitively I'm like "well of course, why would it be any other way?" It's grounded in good stuff. It's grounded in what matters and what works.

### 3.2.3 *Views on Leadership*

Each participant was asked about their leadership style and how that influenced their day-to-day work as well as the long-term visioning for the organization. Variations on the ideas of innovation, development and growth were prevalent, of themselves as leaders, their staff and their organization as a whole.

Well I think that if our job is to maximize human potential that means for all of us. So I hope that...is a place where people come to learn and work and feel free to make mistakes, knowing that – and I say this to all my staff – if you make a mistake and I know that you made that mistake because you thought it was actually the best thing to do for the client, I am behind you 100%. I do not expect you to never make mistakes and I want them to take some risks. But if they make a mistake and it's because they're self-centered, it's for their own benefit, or for some other reason, then they are going to have a problem with me. Um, but I, you know, we really have fund where we fund staff education. I'm really big on staff education and innovation. My staff have a lot of tolerance for me because they are always guinea pigs in one or two of my experiments.

For your staff, you have to be a motivator and encourager and you want them to be able to see beyond their own limitations, you know. You want them to see their own potential. You want them be working hard towards that. I'm not a micromanager. I hate micromanaging. When I hire someone, I mean it's my expectation that you know, the strengths that I see them talk about it that they are going to be exhibited, you know, as they go along in their job. If they are struggling with that, it's obviously my role to assist, but I do expect staff to be able to take their own initiative in terms of their development, and being insightful, and receiving feedback.

On the upside, I think I do really recognize people's strengths. I also like to develop people in to their interests and passions. So that means that if they don't want to stay in a particular job, I want to see them evolve if they are really good people and have a lot of skills to offer so that I captivate their passions and interest, as opposed to just pigeonholing them in to something – that I don't think that works for them and I don't think it works for the organization.

Several participants spoke of an emotional, or personal connection to the issues the organization works for or the client group being supported. This was described as key to leading with passion.

So if you don't have a heartfelt connection, you can't lead the organization. And the one thing I know I brought to this organization was the accuracy in the message and um, my heart. I mean I've been passionate about issues in [details organization's focus] for you know, my entire career, and even before that, right? And that's never going to go away. I mean it will evolve in to something else but it's my passion. You cannot lead without passion. You can't.

I mentored a bunch of young kids. Started off with troubled kids that were using alcohol and drugs and things. One of them I put to school myself, paid for it myself. She is doing really well. She's at the ... now and in competitions and just loving it. She's doing really good. And was my first kind of where I really thought – I just saw how good she did and where she came from and where she got to, and it hooked me. And it hooked me. And I just wanted to do more and more. I just wanted to do it.  
[Referencing her work as executive director]

The discussion around a personal connection to their work led some participants to discuss their views on feminism and some tension surrounding this perspective. Those participants that addressed this issue described feminism uniquely, although the trend was towards an anti-colonial understanding of feminism. Despite the fact that not every woman described herself or her organization as 'feminist', universally each participant described a passion for supporting women, either as staff through professional development and promotional opportunities or through the direct service provided by their organization. All participants shared this awareness that women, at times, need extra

support or opportunities. Ranging from the subtle to the direct, this belief in the power and possibility of women is an element of all feminist theories and approaches. This common theme with these women leaders adds important insight in to themselves and their organizations. The void for women, either as clients looking for supports or as leaders looking for inspiration, resonated with all participants.

This participant directly expressed her concern about the lack of future opportunities for women from diverse circumstances. Her focus on women motivates her leadership and is rooted in her lived experience as a woman and especially throughout her career.

Not everybody wants to support women like that. Isn't that a shame? You know, don't they...what does it matter what they did? It's about the journey that they are taking and the path that they are on now, not what they did to get there. It's...and I don't care in prison...if I would have cared what they did in there? I had murderers in front of me – what difference, they are a woman and they deserve another chance in life. And the flower business gives them that. First of all it helps build your self-esteem because some of them had never even touched a flower, and never done anything, had never created anything in their life. But now they have that. They have that opportunity. Even when they come here. There's women who come here and they've never had anything. They've been battered, victimized. Some of them come here because someone will believe in them and give them a job and help them get their kids back. It builds self-esteem. [Unclear]. It's worth that.

[Then later, same participant]

I don't know where all the people are who are making women's lives better. I don't know where that bandwagon is. I don't understand that part of it. Maybe one day it will change.

When asked about their experience specifically as a woman and as a leader, this participant expressed dismay about the lack of women mentors who shared her experience. The result was that she sought advice and guidance from men, especially around the development of a social enterprise, for her non-profit organization.



Wow. I don't think women are empowered nearly as much as they need to be and I think that women mentors for women like me are sorely lacking. I've had to get my mentoring from men in the field. And even then, um, it was difficult for me to access anybody who purely coming or looking at their organization through a lens as a business. It was difficult for me to access people like that.

In the quote below this participant spoke about the value of women leaders and the extra things that are a part of daily tasks of being a female executive director. Her experience is echoed by the following quote of another woman in terms of the many little things she does on a daily basis. There was a cultural understanding within both organizations that these things would be done because she was a woman.

Um, I have had the personal experience...most of the people, actually every job I've had, my replacement was a man. And, I've always been good at maximizing efficiencies within organizations. In the case of the business centre, maximizing profits and leaving some money behind. And every man who has ever taken over after me has spent the money building a building. So if you look at organizations where women are in charge and organizations where men are in charge, the men will build buildings. And women will spend the money on service. It's really interesting. I don't have any data to back this up but it would be an interesting study just to see – when was your building built and to see the gender. Because men like buildings, there's something to show for it. And [organization's name], if we do our job well, it's invisible. Nobody sees it. And so, I think women somehow understand that piece of it. Or prioritize the human piece of it a little bit more. And another thing I've noticed is that generally it's taken more than one person to really replace me. And I think that's because most women will get coffee for the board meeting. They'll make the sandwiches. They'll help the president chair the meeting. They'll take the minutes and do everything, right? Whereas if you look at most male executive directors they won't be getting their own coffee. They certainly won't be getting coffee for guests and they are not going to be making sure there are sandwiches. They are going to be delegating that to usually a woman. So I think women are more adept at doing more things. I think they tend to specialize a little bit less and generalize a little bit more.

They cannot, I honestly do not know. I honestly don't know how they are going to do it. Because what I have found, because we're so small I've had to be involved in the minutia of operative detail. Operative detail that's crazy making!

### 3.2.4 *Seeking Solutions*

When these women identified problems or gaps within community services in whatever arena they were working in, they demonstrated willingness and a commitment to addressing them. For all of these women, one of the avenues of addressing these gaps was in the creation of a social enterprise. This had been hinted at in many of the comments made by participants throughout the interviews. In many ways, the combination of experiences of innovation and of a certain type of personality seems to result in a creative approach to resolving typical problems encountered by non-profit organizations. This movement on an issue is of particular relevance to this research because it demonstrates a problem-solving mentality and a willingness to move beyond traditional responses to issues.

The creation of a social enterprise was described as a logical solution to the end result of wanting to provide certain programs for which there was often little money available. Choosing this solution is what set these women apart for this study. These quotes describe how the social enterprise met some identified need for their organization, either in filling a programming gap or providing necessary funding for work they value. Because of the existence of the social enterprise this discretionary funding offers opportunities that would not exist otherwise. The quotes below highlight three key ideas: the social enterprise as the key to fund development; the social enterprise as contributing to social justice; and the role of the social enterprise in contributing to systemic change.

In the quote below, the social enterprise for this organization was the key to creating what the organization needed in order generate the income required to facilitate

desired programs. Creating community programs was at the core of the development of the social enterprise and presented the opportunity to make money to sustain them.

So by virtue of the structure and nature of social enterprise, we run in to this knowing that we were going to do some kind of enterprising thing, to make money, to do all the community programs we want to facilitate.

This organization identified the social enterprise as related to creating more socially just communities by filling identified voids within the social support network. Government funding did not cover these voids and families served by her organization were lacking these services. The organization responded by funding positions that responded to those identified needs.

So we do contract with government to provide services but we also do a lot of our own things so we can take some of our money and hire staff to do family support because government doesn't fund family support, but families need support like you say - even just to fill out the forms or do an appeal or whatever - so we fund those positions on our own.

This social enterprise provided discretionary income that created opportunities for systemic work, specifically prevention activities.

It is a philosophical imperative that we are diversifying our funding and that we look to have discretionary funding, at the same time you know, ensuring that any kind of profit we're seeking has a social, gives back socially.

We generate a revenue source for us, a discretionary revenue source, which over the years has helped contribute money to our prevention activities. Provided money for travel, for other kinds of systemic change, travel for systemic change.

### *3.2.5 Dual Roles*

Any management position requires a certain amount of flexibility and the ability to take on multiple roles within the organization. For this study, I was particularly interested in participants' experiences with being both an executive director of a non-

profit organization and a businesswoman at the same time. In particular, I was curious to know how women who were not trained to be entrepreneurs developed the skill set to imagine, launch, and run a business in addition to their role as an executive director. The responses from participants highlighted a creative approach to learning on the job and in pursuing information through a variety of sources. On the multiple roles, two women had the following to say:

I found [Pause] the difficulty I found was because of the amount of work that was involved in being both. Like being a teacher, running the business, doing all the things to try to cultivate the business was difficult, because you can't do everything – but I was trying to.

It was a fit. And you know, it has been an incredible rollercoaster ride. Really it has. There's been a lot of blood, sweat and tears um, in regard to um, this organizational growth and my own growth within the organization. But really from a career point of view – if you were just to look at a career point of view – it was really worth it. It was a huge learning curve. Oh yeah. Not worth the money! [Laughs] Because you don't get paid that much! But really, really worth the learning curve.

On overcoming the challenges, some participants described a trial and error process and others sought out mentors and information from other sources in the community.

I still make mistakes. Oops, okay that one doesn't work so well! You learn as you go.

I mean, I don't know how else to say it. You learn. You ask questions. You read. You cry. You laugh hysterically. You commiserate with your husband and your colleagues. You [Laughs] quit 22 times [Laughs]. And then you get back up again and... Then you finally realize what you've accomplished...

Very, very difficult. It's been the greatest challenge of my life. Really it has.

The idea of ensuring complementary skills were present in the organization came from multiple women. They described their skill set and then sought people for their staff that offered skill sets they didn't have in order to enhance the capacity of the team and complement their existing strengths. One woman who had a background in business said the following:

I also respect that people, including myself, often have very different strengths and capabilities and other weakness. I recognize that I can't do it all and I don't have all the skills and abilities and neither do my colleagues, so there is a nice complement. I am wary of having a complementary team where people bring different things to the table that complement me, and as an employee can I bring different things to the table that complement them? Yeah, so together it should work well.

Another woman described her approach and the combination of opportunities she created or were available to her throughout her time as executive director.

I think, you know, it's the combination of the length of, you know, my professional life coupled with...continuing education opportunities, coupled with a responsive and visionary board and staff and volunteer group...

The participant with a background in social work described seeking support in the area of fund development.

So my struggle within the context was not being able to have, um, how do I say this? Was not being able to have a more equipped lens, um, or expertise through which I could evaluate the fundraising strategy. It had become beyond my realm of expertise.

Importantly, most of the participants described the need to be open and honest about where their skills were and were not. This transparency was seen as key to successful leadership and was demonstrated in their actions by choosing to create cohesive teams and incorporate people from all levels of the organization in the creation and execution of the social enterprise. The quote below illustrates one woman's ability to

share her weaknesses and be open to receiving support from her team members. This insight demonstrates a willingness to do what is right for her organization and staff, setting her own ego aside.

Read. Learn. Try to find mentors in the community. Um, attempt to complement your um, weakness, I suppose. Try to take a look very clearly at what your weakness is and attempt to bolster that by hiring, you know, good people around you. I think that is really critical. But that involves you as an executive director, as a leader, to be open and teachable and insightful.

### **3.3 The Social Enterprise**

Since all of the participants interviewed either launched their social enterprise or expanded its scope, the story of each organization's social enterprise is closely linked to the woman herself. Her leadership over the organization was a driving factor in the dialogue, inception and creation of the social enterprise. Her values and vision for the non-profit organization became a strategic direction in the form of social enterprise. Because of this intimate link between the two, this next section focuses on the details of her experience in specific regards to the creation and development of a social enterprise project.

The critical examination of a situation and the application of a creative response resonated throughout the interviews. Because of this personal and professional practice, these women all shared the experience of either developing or expanding their organizations' social enterprise. The following sections are about choices - choices and motivations that drove the launching of the social enterprise - and the complications or choices made around appropriate descriptive language for the social enterprise.

### 3.3.1 *Motivations*

Insight in to what motivated the participants and their organizations to embark on the creation or expansion of their organization to include a social enterprise was an important element of this study. Most women described the thought process for coming up with the idea of the social enterprise and the subsequent decisions around what kind of social enterprise would be appropriate. For some it was ‘time’ for the organization, they had reached a certain size or capacity and were looking for new directions. Others described it as a solution to fundraising issues.

So, also in the mid ‘90s, we started to talking about – at the board level – needing to do, develop some sort of fundraising program at [organization’s name]. Up until then we had a relatively small organization. A bunch of unsolicited donations, all from the community, didn’t need to have a lot of donations because we were so small. Again in 1995, 96, 97 as the organization grew, just we needed to... And I don’t know why you know, honestly in hindsight I remember thinking it would be easier to just, rather than do mail-out campaigns and just, you know... my thought process at the time was around how many folks were doing it, and how easy [sarcastic tone] it would be to compete with other, more established non-profits like the YWCA who had donors and lots of money. And understanding that mail-out campaigns and fundraising campaigns take time to build up, so you’ve got to invest two or three or four years of money in to them. We didn’t have money to invest in a mail-out campaign three or four years before we would get a return. So, um, I remember driving around White Rock one day and thinking about the superfluity shops in White Rock. The hospital had superfluity shops which are basically thrift shops and there was the Sally Ann thrift shop on the main street – Johnson Road in White Rock, and I’m thinking we could open a thrift shop. And then processing that between that day and whenever the next board meeting was – oh yeah everybody’s got a thrift shop, it’s going to be hard to compete with the hospital and the Sally Ann. And from there thinking we could just open any business, what the heck?

Well I can’t speak to the original idea except, I mean because that was so long ago, but my understanding was they were looking for a way that would be able to produce a fairly quick cash return. And it was something that you know, was not that complicated to set up you know, and to do, and they had enough help in those beginning stages.

It is just to make money to support client programs. So it can take money from that and say subsidize something like [name of a client program] which will then help clients.

Other participants clearly identified the motivation for the social enterprise as being based in directly providing something for a client group that had been identified as lacking. These programs were more likely to be the ones that offered training and employment opportunities for clients and were the impetus for the non-profit organization's creation.

Because, first of all because the opportunities for women with barriers is not there. And I learned that lesson in fifteen years, over and over again, that there is no opportunity for women with barriers. There just isn't. And it doesn't matter if women are disabled, mentally challenged women, um, just whatever, women on welfare. There's nothing for them. Women on welfare. There's nothing! They have these things where they can go and check out these things for re-training but they make the challenge so hard! They give up! So what do they do? They stay on welfare. I knew that inside that was a big, big issue. And that for women to come out of jail...and that was my main thing, women coming out of jail. How difficult it was for the ones that came back. Never mind the ones I had.

More than anything else? It's just wanting to help. Wanting to help and having a lot of friends that have over the years, over the years, young kids like [name of past client] who is now at the [name of restaurant] – it's selfish of me, but I feel great for seeing how far she's come and...what it's meant. And it gives me a really good feeling. And I like that feeling. And I like seeing people succeed. And giving them – and most of the time they just don't have anyone to help them – that little bit of help, just a tiny bit of help – that is all it takes and they are well on their way. And if you don't have it, things can go horribly wrong. You know?

The women that just kept coming back through those swinging doors. And I thought there's got to be something that you can do just to see them that one step further.

For others it was a part of what they had always envisioned for the organization and was integrally linked to the work being done. There was a perceived link between the



mandate of the organization and the creation of the social enterprise, an integration that was described with passion.

We had donations. We had women. And we wanted to make money.

It is an *essential* component. We could not, *not* be in business. And could not, *not* operate social enterprise and from the perspective that we do it, because it is um, so linked to who we are and what we are about.

Because this organization had few government contracts, this participant described her organization's uniqueness. For her, this uniqueness led to the development of a social enterprise as a way of supporting their work.

This is a different animal. It is a different animal the moment you step in to a small NGO [non-governmental organization] that doesn't have a lot of government contracts. It's a different animal.

### 3.3.2 *The Language of Social Enterprise*

It was notable in the interviews that different participants used different language to describe what I was calling social enterprise. Certain participants had very clear language that they preferred and others were very casual with their choice. Some participants expressed mixed feelings about how their business was described. Some did not use the term 'social enterprise' deliberately because they felt it implied something that was not what they were about, or that it set the business in an inferior light.

Social enterprise is marginalized. It's a nice, little business that is run by a non-profit that doesn't really know what it is doing. Um, I don't know. I prefer social purpose business or business with a social purpose.

This organization chose to prioritize describing community impacts as a key part of their message. This helped them stay away from saying they are a non-profit business, something they felt would lead to incorrect assumptions by their potential clients.

So, basically today and in the past, what's really important is that your quality and product are equal or better than the product of your competitor. And then the way you talk about the mission and the social aspects is secondary. And it's how you talk about it that you need to be very smart about. So we never say we are a non-profit [name of social enterprise], because that just sounds like you are sub-par and you don't take it seriously. You don't run a business. You run a charity. You don't speak about it like that. What we do talk about is our impacts in the community.

### 3.3.3 *Role of the Board of Directors*

There were two prominent perspectives on the role of the board of directors in developing and running a social enterprise. All participants acknowledged that developing a social enterprise would not be possible without the support of the board for both legal and practical reasons. They also described the caution of the board and the need to protect the organization as their primary responsibility. Given the relevance of the board of directors in the life of non-profit organizations, it seemed important to investigate the relationship between them and the executive director. As each woman held the relationship to different value, it was understandable that they did not share experiences in this area. Since ultimately the board is responsible for the sustainability of the organization, two participants described their boards as hesitant in embarking on new ventures for the non-profit organization. One described her board as needing time for the idea to “germinate”, while the other described the board's caution as the follows:

We are a very comfortable association and we have a spirit of social enterprise, but even my board is really stingy when it comes to throwing out money in terms of business enterprise, and they should be.

Another woman described her board as doing a good job, which for her meant not interfering too much with her day-to-day operations.

And I have a great board of directors that is fabulous. They leave me alone. So you know, we are allowed to figure this out and that has made this a lot easier.

Finally, the role of the board was seen as critical to the operation of both the non-profit organization and the social enterprise, with an emphasis on the amount of work that is needed from them.

My board of directors is a working board, so they've been, they've been really working hard to make sure it was done properly, eh? So that's how it's been.

It seemed as though the board of directors meant different things to different executive directors. The relationship was one of mutual dependence, but the fulfillment of the obligations of those relationships varied. It was clear that having the support of the board of directors around the social enterprise was crucial, although there seemed to be a range of levels of involvement by board members.

#### *3.3.4 Not Business-Light*

Based on participants' responses there was an undeniable shared understanding that some element of business planning or execution had to be a part of any social enterprise venture. Many described launching a social enterprise as no easier than launching a business in the private sector, and that it took, as described by more than one woman "time, energy, and money and risk, blood, sweat and tears". Three of the women interviewed specifically identified the challenge of a good service at a good price. Further they described the fact that a social enterprise was not in itself a good enough reason for people to patronize the business. This realization that having a business with a social focus may have also influenced some social enterprises to be more particular with their choice of language as described in the earlier section. The language of the business was

seen as a possible barrier to attracting customers. Although good business practices were not specifically addressed, many participants brought up the importance of treating the social enterprise as nothing less than a full business. The relationship to the non-profit organization held various levels of meaning for different organizations depending on the mission of both elements.

So the fact that the money is going somewhere nice is gravy, right?  
You've got to do all the same things everybody does in the private sector.

And secondly, is that it's not like business-light – it's like business-plus, if you will. Just because you have to do all those things you would in a regular business, plus sustain all those other things you do for the community. It's actually quite a challenge to balance.

We're not going to give less or any lower. I'll give you what the going thing is. I can give you the best at the going rate. It's a good business practice.

### **3.4 The Outcomes of the Social Enterprise**

As explored in the previous section the women interviewed all shared stories of critically looking at various circumstances, be it a program, an organization they worked for, or a community they were a part of, and developing solutions to identified gaps in service provision. This creativity exemplifies who these women are. It also highlights another aspect to their personalities and that is the ability to assess outcomes.

Demonstrating that they can analyze circumstances and develop a response to influence those circumstances is key to developing strategy for all aspects of leadership.

When asked about the outcomes of their social enterprise the participants described a range of outcomes. Since the intent of social enterprises involved in this study varies, the outcomes, either expected or not, are measured and valued differently by participants. If one social enterprise is designed to maximize profits, it may not meet an

objective to employ people with barriers to employment. Participants mentioned in various ways that it was crucial to have a clear mission and to follow it in terms of the social enterprise. Despite this clarity around having a stated purpose, some of the executive directors described unintended positive outcomes. In addition to those unintended outcomes, many outcomes were deliberate and expected. The following section details outcomes for individual clients, communities, and the organization.

#### *3.4.1 Individual Outcomes*

No matter how it was achieved, the social enterprise was clearly linked to providing service for clients. Client outcomes were very important to the participants, with some describing in detail the specific changes for one individual and others expanding on the possibilities.

[Former student's name] has her very first apartment in her life. And she's proud of herself. And she walks around with her head high. And it's just incredible how far she's come. And now she's making money and putting it back in to the community. We are huge. We are doing really good stuff.

It provides opportunities for women who wouldn't otherwise wouldn't have them to be in leadership and to earn a good income...

Very often women who come for community service hours end up taking on the part of volunteering. Many of the women who join us with that original intention continue to be a part of the organization because they appreciate that sense of camaraderie and community that is created.

#### *3.4.2 Community Outcomes*

Each participant spoke about her organization's role in the community and the impact of having a social enterprise. Because the revenue generated by the social enterprise or the opportunities created by the social enterprise had a clear purpose, the

community outcomes were often purposeful and relevant, even though they may have been expected. One participant described the community's sense of ownership when the social enterprise she developed grew and provided employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

It really was a lesson in how once you start something, the community will sort of coalesce around you and everybody of course can take some ownership of the success of these folks.

Many of the social enterprise are looking at new ways of doing things either in service delivery or in revenue generation for non-profit organizations. One woman described the partnership work they have been able to engage in and the opportunity to establish higher expectations in the area of community development, and in "setting" standards and "raising the bar" in terms of visualizing what is possible for marginalized communities.

So together we are setting a standard philosophy around food, food security, and community economic development. That looks at a CED [community economic development] model for food security as opposed to a charitable model.

I think [organization] in the initial collaboration with partners will be taking a bigger leadership role in setting the tone, setting the expectation, raising the bar in what food and CED should look like.

Another woman referenced the unique approach her social enterprise follows in helping marginalized people learn culinary skills and the role it plays in the lives of people beyond simply learning a skill set.

I think it's huge. I don't think there is a model like it. I think that um, there should be a lot more of them in the community. It's built up where we are known. We've helped a lot of people, um, get off the street.

This woman told of similar successful experiences in her program.

And we've seen lots of women become successful from here and that's – not just from here, from the whole thing. I still see some of my students from jail, right? I just put one to work. She's been out of jail for a little while, but she's got cancer. Now she's come through that and I just put her to work with a friend. And she's trying to make it, again. But they do. In the end. It works.

### 3.4.3 *Organization Outcomes*

From a financial perspective, there were mixed reports on the impact the social enterprise has on the non-profit organization. This was consistent with the fact that different social enterprises are designed with different goals in mind. This finding also remains consistent in the literature reviewed when examining why non-profit organizations decide to launch a social enterprise. Financial possibilities are listed as one of the driving reasons, but not always the primary one. The primary one remains to fill a gap or a need in a community. One participant described the social enterprise as the source for her organization's core funding and others were finding that they were still developing them to their full financial potential.

This participant described the benefits of having a cash flow from her organization's thrift store enterprises.

Um, but what it does for the organization is that it allows a cash flow. On a daily basis. And when you are so heavily reliant the way we are, on fundraising and donor related giving, um it's integral to have that daily cash flow. That you know every single day money is coming in to the organization, right?

This woman described her organization's financial success with her store enterprises.

Well we've been doing this for 9 years now and, uh it has. It has. We've had lots of success, financial success over the years.

The same woman went in to more detail about the opportunities this has afforded her non-profit organization.

We generate a revenue source for us, a discretionary revenue source, which over the years has helped contribute money to our prevention activities. Provided money for travel, for other kinds of systemic change, travel for systemic change. It has allowed us to create positions at different times. It has allowed us to hire contract workers. It has allowed us to supplement our general direct services, which are only partially funded through traditional methods.

Consistent across all participants was the role of the social enterprise in creating awareness for the organization and its goals. This was described as having a myriad of benefits from developing a source of potential donors to having community members interact with complex social issues in a safe way.

...we recognize the wealth of awareness that the thrift stores are able to generate in terms of who we are, where we are, and what we do. There's obviously individual s that are volunteers that we work with...all of these people are potential donors for us, right?

So, it is a public way to connect with the issue of violence against women. First and foremost, it is our storefront.

One woman described the volume of publicity received for her organization's social enterprise. At the time of its launch she describes it as 'incredibly unique' and it had a clear focus to generate income for the work of her women's anti-violence organization. Because of the attention generated by the social enterprise, her organization received significant unplanned publicity contributing positively to their public profile.

...and there's been some sort of unintended perks or unexpected perks for [organization]. We've had so much attention around the [social enterprise] because when we started it, it was incredibly unique.



#### 3.4.4 *Conflicts and Difficulties*

The process of developing, launching and running a social enterprise follows many of the same processes as for any business. Subsequently, there are a host of complications and difficulties that are shared with businesses, yet there are also a series of challenges that are unique to social enterprises launched by non-profit organizations.

As discussed earlier, many participants felt the pressure to run both the business and the non-profit organization, often putting in twice the amount of hours as a result. The pressure to deliver a successful business was felt throughout the launching process and the level of uncertainty and risk was significant. Two participants who do not operate thrift stores discussed the challenge of delivering a competitive product and in competing with other providers who are not facing the multiple roles of running a non-profit organization and a social enterprise.

And [I] felt incredibly obligated to make it work. Um, so yeah it was a lot of work. It was a lot of work. And a lot of stress and lots of weeks in those first couple of years, or lots of pay periods, where I wasn't sure we were going to make payroll. You know, pleading with the bank to extend the line of credit for a week at a time. Um, you know not everybody is built for that. And I think there is a perception that it's easier than it is. I had no idea. I had no idea. No idea what I was getting in to. No idea I would work as many hours as I worked. No idea, yeah. No idea. And people don't... when you are providing a service or doing a business, people might hire you to do what you are doing or might buy goods from you, um, because you are non-profit and the money is going good places, but only if you are providing a really good service at a competitive price. So the fact that the money is going somewhere nice is gravy, right? So it's not like you can charge a premium because your money is going somewhere nicer or you can provide slightly reduced services. You've got to do all the same things everybody does in the private sector. And I think that there is a bit of a perception that people will gravitate towards you because your money is doing something nice - and that's just not my experience. So it's hard work. I had no idea how hard it was going to be...

I'm competitive. We're not going to give you any less or any lower. I'll give you what the going thing is. I can give you the best at the going rate.

It's a good business practice. There's a lot of uphill to get anybody to believe in what we're here for. That doesn't happen overnight. So we keep trying.

Participants spoke honestly about the challenges in creating a sustainable organization from their social enterprise and some were still drawing on support from other sources. Depending on the organization this support varied between start-up grants, government contracts, and private donors.

So I think we are going to be able to build up the restaurant and the catering to where, even if we get government funding and it's pulled we'd be able to survive with that. Get it up and running on its own and not need to look for money anywhere else.

So I would say cultivating the business and getting it going, and getting the funding has been the biggest challenge. By far.

Participants had strong opinions about the responsibility of governments to adequately fund organizations that provide community services. When asked about the impact of generating their own funding stream, there was a sense of purpose in what they were doing, a sense of ownership. Many acknowledged the tension around this issue and were reflective on the impact their decisions had. The reflective stance was partnered with a practical attitude with a strong belief in the work and models they had developed. Their belief in their social enterprise and the benefits provided in the community was balanced by an insightful analysis on how the government could be more supportive.

I continue to believe that government should be paying for the service we provide. From a philosophical perspective, I want to make that clear. I shouldn't have to go out and start a business to support [organization's name]. We're providing a valuable service to the community. And government, which is you and me, should be paying for the service we provide. Um, so there is that philosophical position and then there's reality. I can go out and argue until the cows come home that government should be paying us adequately for the work we do – but the reality is they are not and they never have been. Likely they won't anytime soon. So I can spend the next twenty years of my life whining about how hard done

by we are, and I do a little bit of that [Laughs] don't get me wrong! Or I can do something else about it. So that is the tension I guess. You have to put your philosophical piece out there and then you have to deal with reality.

So my personal view on that is absolutely governments have a role to play in terms of supporting people and their community, and having said all that they should also give us a supportive environment within which to operate a social enterprise, whether that be taxes – whatever that might be. But my personal view is, I like the idea of creating your own destiny. In other words, I don't feel any resentment for running a social enterprise because I have to because the government isn't giving me enough money. This is a purposeful choice to do this.

Because there are some people who believe that if you go and raise money and pay for itself then you are letting the government off the hook. And so I get very frustrated because are you just going to sit there and wait for government to give you money and tell you what to do? Or are you going to go and display some initiative and at least try to see what you can do without the government, you know?

#### *3.4.5 Critical Reflections*

The above quotes illustrate the reflective stance that all participants had on the role of social enterprises and some thoughts on the responsibility of government to care for its citizens. There is a discourse of tension around letting the government off the hook for the full funding of non-profit organizations. Criticism from other non-profit organizations and some academics feel that social enterprises contribute to the government's ability to shirk this responsibility. Many participants acknowledged this tension but also provided their own resolutions.

Acknowledging that social enterprises were but one option for generating revenue and contributing to the sustainability of non-profit organizations in the future, participants had the following comments:

I don't think they are the only way, but I think that they are a component that will help you survive.

Um, so how do you react to this change in environment? Well you have to fight fire with fire and just become a lot more aware about business and how to play the game their way because that is the new game in town. I'm still wrestling with how to do that because the funding cuts that we've received over the years are very dramatic and they are going to continue to be that way. Luckily, we have a cushion because we have a social enterprise and I am very grateful for that.

When participants were asked about why some were critical of social enterprises, the responses focused again on the practical outcomes they had experienced with their social enterprises, and in the driving need to put the organization and client needs first.

So by virtue of the structure and nature of social enterprise, we run in to this knowing that we were going to do some kind of enterprising thing, to make money, to do all the community programs we want to facilitate.

So we do contract with government to provide services, but we also do a lot of our own things so we can take some of our money and hire staff to do family support because government doesn't fund family support, but families need support like you say – even just to fill out the forms or do an appeal or whatever – so we fund those positions on our own.

So, with that in mind it is up to us. It is a philosophical imperative that we are diversifying our funding and that we look to have discretionary funding, at the same time you know, ensuring that any kind of profit we are seeking has a social, gives back socially.

#### *3.4.6 Space for Social Work – Within Our Realm?*

Since only one woman interviewed had a background in social work, I was interested in the perception of the role of social work in social enterprises. Because of the discussion around tensions in this area, as a social worker I was also curious what their impression were on the lack of social work being done in this area. The responses were encouraging with a strong recognition of this as a role that suits the profession. Despite the recognition of this possibility, some implied that social work was conservative in their approach and may be thinking too small in working in this area. Other thoughts stemmed

around a lack of education and awareness about how to develop social enterprises and what the possibilities entail.

So I would just say, more education, I'm really thrilled that social work is really looking at this as an area of development because I think there is some great things that can be done. Because social work has always been about using resources, regardless of where they come from, and helping people in community. Um, and that's way more exciting than getting grants from government. Yeah! Because can think of what you want to do on your own! You don't have to listen to them.

I think it's a lack of education. I think that when it's done properly, it's done really, really well. And the point of it is, what are you trying to do? You need to get funds in the door so you can be sustainable. Salvation Army. I know there are some pros and cons around them, but you know what? They've managed to own their properties. They've managed to run their programs. They've managed to have money that isn't designated to this tight little box where that is the only place you can spend your money. The money comes from the thrift store and it's able to support their operations. You've got to get rid of the junk anyway. They have been able to contribute to the recycling and green efforts all over North America. And even for that, in itself I'm commending them. I mean come on, we've got to think out of the box here. Quite frankly, I think social workers think way too small half the time. Way too small! Only interested in this tiny little sphere of trying to create change.

The themes presented in the findings speak directly to the practice and theory of social work by directly addressing many of the concerns and challenges within the field.

The following *Discussion and Implications* chapters coalesce the insights presented by the participants and offer ideas for incorporating the topic of social enterprises in to social work discourse and linking it directly to practice.

## CHAPTER 4 Discussion

### 4.1 Overview

The findings from this study describe the experiences of women executive directors who have started or expanded their non-profit organization with the development of a social enterprise. The themes extracted from the individual interview analysis provide insight in to the complexity of social enterprises and expand the scope of understanding on this issue in relation to the practice of social work. The findings from this study offer a timely reminder to social work of its continuing need to develop and innovate creative approaches to addressing both client needs and systemic change. The participants offer examples of how they approach this work through the development of social enterprises, but also speak openly about the challenges inherent in such work. This chapter explores those themes in more depth and closely links them with a broad feminist analysis about women's experiences in regards to work. In addition, connections with agency theory are explored.

#### *4.1.1 The Experiences of Women*

The purpose and strength of this study is in the valuing of women's lived experiences, a core component of a feminist research methodology. Informed by three prominent authors in this area: Maria Mies, Kathryn E. King and Christine Webb, this study was conducted with a feminist research agenda in mind. Beginning with an understanding and a belief of men's place of privilege in both society and research, the focus was on sharing the personal and professional stories of women in leadership positions engaging in innovative work. The focus of the research is designed to be

pertinent to women with an understanding of the lived oppression of women (King, 1994). Consistent with anti-oppressive, feminist social work practice and with profession ethics, this study locates participants as the ‘experts’ in their experiences with social enterprises (Padgett, 2008). Although women have been marginalized from many aspects of society and research, the women interviewed for this study may be considered to be more privileged due to their status as executive director and a leader within their communities. Sharing a range of backgrounds, their stories have been documented for this study and contribute to enhancing women’s role in research and in management. Qualitative research is seen as a collaborative process and the data gathered from participants is highly valued for its contribution to this process (Cresswell, 2007).

#### *4.1.2 Women and Work*

In partnership with feminist analysis, the study draws on insights from management and workplace theories, with a focus on women at work. The experiences of women in workplace environments have consistently been documented and discussed as different and unique from those of men (Alvesson & Due Billing, 1997; Asplund, 1988; Jacobsen, 1998; Tanton, 1994). Because women experience work, and subsequently management positions, as different from their male counterparts, these findings illuminate the unique experiences of women leaders and social entrepreneurs. Women comprise 81% of the social workers within the province of British Columbia (BC Work Futures, 2010), a clear majority. Despite this understanding of the differences between women and men in the workplace, as well as the ongoing examination of the differences biologically, psychologically, sociologically, and economically, it cannot be ignored that academia has continuously excluded women as both researchers and subjects (Jacobsen,

1998; Maddock, 1999; Pynes, 2000). Using women as the defining category for this study is an attempt at redressing this imbalance, allowing for both a focus on female thought and behaviour by a female researcher. The focus on women, and in using a feminist-centered lens for analysis, provides a warranted emphasis within this study. The themes and following discussion are rooted in participant's stories and described based on my interpretation and the application of a feminist lens.

## **4.2 Nurture and Nature**

Participants all shared stories of a personal connection to the work they were involved in. Many of them discussed experiences from their past that they identified as the impetus of their work, or that gave them a strong emotional attachment to the issues faced by the client group their organization supported. These personal experiences translate much of the woman herself into her work as a leader, in turn influencing the practice and direction for the organization. Women identified this as a source of strength for them giving them passion or clarity into their work. This intimate link was important to participants, either as a motivation for the work they do, or in providing understanding and empathy for their client group.

In addition to having an experience linking them to their organization, participants described something inside them that motivated them, a driving inclination. Language from their interviews indicated an intrinsic motivation to work hard and to develop solutions to presenting problems. Women described themselves as being built that way, a natural occurring inclination. This was clearly illustrated by stories women shared about their professional careers as they described their journey to becoming executive directors.



A pattern of professional problem solving emerged which many participants readily identified.

### **4.3 Uniqueness to Women**

To varying degrees, all participants recognized the uniqueness of women either as a client group with specific needs, or in themselves as executive directors. In the interviews all participants expressed this differently. Some were explicit in describing their feminist analysis that they bring to their work, describing it with a post-colonial, anti-oppression focus. Participants were clear to separate themselves from first-wave feminism, describing it as only meeting the needs of white, upper-class women and contributing to the marginalization of all other women. Others expressed it through their particular program focus and their philosophy. When discussing women leaders, participants agreed there are a lot of women who work in the non-profit sector, specifically as leaders in this area. These leaders were seen as having a different focus than men who hold the same positions, with women being more driven by client service. Some were dismayed about the lack of mentors for women leaders, despite the fact that they are the majority of the workforce in the social service sector.

A review of the literature shows that public sector managers or directors of non-profit organizations operate in a more complex environment than those in private businesses; a constant need to juggle social objectives, work with multiple stakeholders, manage limited resources, and oversee daily operations knowing that major changes could happen anytime, creates an environment that fosters complex and innovative management practices. Since women are more likely to be managers in the public sector, this skill set and challenges are predominantly those of women non-profit leaders. These

women, through experience and vision, create innovative responses to a complex environment. Research is showing that women non-profit managers appear to have a strategic approach to change both within and beyond their organizations, often focused on challenging structural and management frameworks. Women non-profit managers demonstrate a focus on social objectives and inclusive management. These innovators are often challenging norms and pushing for a re-evaluation of how things are done in agencies and may advocate for changes in management style, practices and measures (Maddock, 1999). This uniqueness was reflected in the findings of this study.

#### **4.4 Challenges**

The stories of developing social enterprises told by participants were full of challenges. The hard work required was considered necessary and all were in agreement that they were the type of people who could handle the extra burden of meeting the goals of a non-profit organization and a social enterprise. Learning along the way was a shared experience for many women. Some had relevant business experience or training in various aspects of running a business; despite this there were many unknowns. Because each social enterprise is unique in various ways, each participant faced different challenges. If any of the challenges were shared among participants, the impacts and details were different. The risks undertaken by launching a social enterprise was mentioned by all participants, and there was agreement that the decision to undertake such a venture should not be taken lightly. The use of 'social enterprise' as language was seen by some as limiting, and they felt that they had to battle against associated images of non-profit organizations incompetently running a business. Some chose not to use that language, others embraced it with pride and made it a selling feature of their operations.

All agreed that tension around social enterprises existed, but identified this tension in different ways. The issue of “letting the government off the hook” by developing a revenue stream was familiar to all participants, yet their responses varied. Most agreed in principle that was the case but were driven by practicality and an overarching need to meet clients needs. Achieving these needs was done either through developing funds for programs, or providing employment training. The issue of government not meeting its obligations was not one that affected their motivations to do what was best for their organizations and to explore social enterprises as one of those options.

#### **4.5 Purposeful Choice**

Societal change is brought about by people recognizing that things could be otherwise, believing in their own inherent power and acting on their circumstances to achieve positive change. (Jeffery, 2011, p.7)

Despite the identified challenges and philosophical tension acknowledged by participants, there was a clear sense of strength in having a social enterprise. The control that it offered organizations was prevalent in the participant’s stories, whether through their ability to design programs that met identified needs or fund staff positions that worked towards systemic change. This freedom and ownership over outcomes was a universal experience for these women. The identified outcomes by participants met multiple goals for clients, the organization, and within the community. The difference among social enterprises meant that different outcomes were achieved, however, all were rooted in the participants approach to social justice. Whether directly or indirectly, the social enterprises were seen as a key element in meeting the social justice goals of the organizations. The resulting outcomes were seen to be in the best interest for clients who have immediate needs and who can’t wait for a philosophical discussion, or a long

lobbying attempt at the government. For organizations and communities, the outcomes ranged from having a population that was better equipped to participate in community life, to raising awareness about key issues for marginalized groups. The sense of making a purposeful choice to fund and facilitate programs that organizations deemed important was clear, giving executive directors autonomy where it hadn't existed before.

The premise of agency theory offers useful insights in to the behaviour of the participants in this study. Agency theory has an inherent focus on the relationship between the individual and society and how change is achieved in this relationship. Agency theory includes the ability of individuals or groups to act on their situations and behave as objects, rather than subjects in their lives, in order to shape circumstances of themselves and possibly others (Jeffery, 2011). Many of the participants described what they were doing with their social enterprises as the opportunity to change communities and affect individuals through relevant programs and diversified funding. The use of language such as 'control', 'a sense of power', 'belief in what we are doing', is consistent with agency theory values of self-determination, resilience, and the notion that things could be different. This mindset was prevalent throughout the interviews and characterized the essence of how the women described themselves – from their early work experiences to their leadership style as executive director.

#### **4.6 Motivations**

Broadly, the motivations articulated by participants for having a social enterprise fell in to two categories: to meet funding needs for the organization, in turn allowing them to facilitate programs, or to create employment and training opportunities for people with barriers to traditional employment. In both circumstances, it was to meet an

identified, unmet need that participants saw lacking in the community. If profits are generated, it was put back in to the organization to fund programs not covered by other means. If training was the purpose, it was to offer opportunities to people who wouldn't have them otherwise. These motivations are aimed at improving people's lives and in creating a more socially just society.

Although no men were interviewed in this study, it is notable that studies done in the United Kingdom that focused on women entrepreneurs show that they have significantly different experiences than men, ranging from differences in motivations for start-up, different challenges in operations, and a notable difference in attitudes towards 'success' and 'failure' (Carter & Cannon, 1992). This was reflected in participants' responses on their thoughts about being a woman leader and the varying expectations placed on their daily operations.

From this discussion, social work can draw relevant implications for professional practice. They are explored in the following chapter on *Implications for Social Work Practice*.

## CHAPTER 5 Implications

This chapter explores the implications of social enterprises on both social work practice and research, while offering a critical perspective on its limitations.

### 5.1 Making the Connection: Social Work and Social Enterprises

At first glance, it may be tempting to dismiss the discussion of social enterprises as beyond the sphere of social work. Social work is involved in many aspects of the personal and political realm and the thought of “going in to business” could be viewed with distaste, either from a practical or philosophical perspective. It is important to add the role of provincial and federal governments to this discussion. Social work is not an autonomous profession and is clearly affected by funding and policy choices made by governments. Over the years, government agencies have come to recognize the importance and expertise of community organizations, yet the relationship remains unequal (Lavallette & Ferguson, 2007). As governments are often major funders of non-profit organizations, many were faced with the choice of meeting contract objectives and prioritizing service delivery over social change activities. The pressure of everyday client service with minimal resources as kept many organizations focused on service provision and subsequently many of the founding principles and ideas of non-profit organizations, such as community organizing and political agendas, have vanished from their work. Participants’ stories of social enterprise development offer insight on how they have met the goals of engaging in more radical work of non-profit organizations, while balancing a complex relationship with government agencies (Lavallette & Ferguson, 2007).

The following section outlines a series of implications for social work practice and an analysis on the issue of social enterprises. When new requirements or developments in the field are implemented, social work has an ethical responsibility to reflectively examine their usefulness and applicability to our work. This section presents some direct implications to social work policy and practice and highlights the applicability of social enterprises towards meeting social work objectives in society.

## **5.2 Social Work Research**

Social workers need research done by other social workers, arguably no matter what the topic. The approach to people-centered work with a clear vision of social justice must be reflected in day-to-day work and in academic research. As Deborah K. Padgett wrote: “Social work research is change-oriented, regardless of methodology. As such it is unapologetically committed to improving peoples’ lives by contributing to more effective and humane practices and policies”. Adding a social work perspective to the exploding area of social enterprises is key. Undoubtedly, social enterprises have provided lasting solutions to some of their participants, particularly those in employment related programs. Systemic change, as written by Padgett above, affects people as the benefits ripple out in to the community. It is not difficult to understand that a person who develops job skills in a kitchen setting for example, is then more likely to have a job, be able to spend money in their community, provide for their family, and have a greater sense of self worth. Knowing what is current in the discourse around social enterprises when the research has been done by social workers has direct benefits to client groups. Having a thorough analysis of social enterprises encompassing all aspects of its impact allows social workers to advocate effectively on behalf of client groups. This analysis can

help formulate decisions on whether organizations will benefit from the implementation of a social enterprise, what the outcomes will be on clients and in the community, and what policies and procedures will be needed to support this decision.

Research in this area is directly and intricately linked to social work practice both from a practical and a theoretical standpoint. Practically, knowing and understanding the experience of social enterprise can help social workers make informed decisions about embarking upon them. These decisions may result in social enterprises being created that have change-making potential. Alternatively, if social workers decide not to undertake social enterprises, having research from their own perspective illuminates why it is not suited to their situation. In short, it allows social workers to be better informed and more well-equipped to make a thoughtful and relevant decision for organizations.

Theoretically, social enterprises are part of a systemic change movement and are expanding at a rapid pace. One of the challenges voiced by social workers in a variety of workplace settings is the issue of what is unique about their skills and perspective.

Having social work based research on a variety of topics helps us develop a professional identity for ourselves and distinguishes us among other professions.

Such research contributes valuably to ensuring that social enterprises are undertaken with social work values at the core. If social workers are developing ideas and studies, then those priorities, as well as the profession's unique approach will be used by others in making decisions. Social work research then, becomes part of the dialogue.



### **5.3 Part of the Social Work Sphere**

Secondly, social enterprises are being developed and are operated by non-profit organizations, a workplace of many social workers. As illustrated earlier in the *Context* section, non-profit organizations are increasingly being forced to explore alternative ways of financing programs and services. The funding cuts are happening to our workplaces and affecting our jobs. This has put social enterprise on the radar for many organizations out of necessity. For social workers who do not work directly in the non-profit sector and are employed in a government or health care setting, they will still be indirectly operating with social enterprises through referrals, networking, and professional associations (Gray, et al. 2003). Furthermore, the area of community economic development where social workers often play roles in organizing, leading and strategizing, social enterprise has risen in prominence.

### **5.4 Transferable Skills**

Research on social enterprises has direct applications to the practice of social work because many of the skills held by social workers are extremely relevant in regards to social enterprises. Social workers work with a social justice mandate with a variety of stakeholders, to create sustainable change in the lives of our clients. We are concerned about macro issues in our communities and we know how to make do with few resources in a creative fashion. Our profession may be very skilled at assessing, innovating, and implementing social enterprises.

There are shared skills that are related to running a small business and an organization. The development of strategic plans, handling of budgets, and overseeing

teams to meet a shared goal apply to work in both arenas and are among the keys to developing a successful social enterprise. The development of human capital and the creation of knowledge in the area of social enterprises has emerged from the roots of social movements and affiliated professions, including social work (Pitcoff, 2004).

Other relevant skills such as working in cross-disciplinary teams, engaging community stakeholders, and conducting accurate community assessments are vital to the implementation of social enterprises and are crucial components of community social workers. The drawing of creative energy and maximizing the use of minimal resources are among the cornerstones of the profession.

## **5.5 Professional Competence**

As highlighted by many of the participants, personal introspection is a key component to leading both a non-profit organization and a social enterprise, offering insight in terms of personal growth, learning, and in assessing what values will guide the organization.

Social work is inherently a reflective profession that values this habit as part of ethical practice. This is exhibited in social work's use of clinical supervision, in social work bachelors and masters education programs, and in many of the techniques employed by social workers used to maintain good self-care: including keeping a journal and participating in personal counseling.

Since social work is inherently benefited by an ongoing reflective stance (Ruckdeschel & Shaw, 2002), the social enterprise landscape deserves this same approach. No matter each professional's personal stance on the issue, social enterprises are a part of the social work arena to varying degrees. Including this perspective and

voice is the most powerful way to stay involved in what is clearly an important trend in both service delivery and organization funding.

## **5.6 Social Justice**

The Canadian Association of Social Workers publishes a Code of Ethics, a document to guide the practice of social work. Value 2 – Pursuit of Social Justice speaks directly to the issue of social enterprises, “Social workers believe in the obligation of people, individually and collectively, to provide resources, services and opportunities for the overall benefit of humanity and to afford them protection from harm.” (CASW, 2005). As illustrated in this study and in others referenced throughout this paper, social enterprises can have direct benefits to people and communities. Because of this fact, social workers have an ethical obligation to explore their possibilities, or at the very least to understand and be able to assess the impacts. Furthermore, the following excerpt from Value 6 – Competence in Professional Practice highlights our responsibility to support ourselves and our colleagues to embark on innovative responses to identified social challenges, “Social workers analyze the nature of social needs and problems, and encourage innovative, effective strategies and techniques to meet both new and existing needs and, where possible, contribute to the knowledge base of the profession.” (CASW, 2005).

It is undeniable that many social workers are drawn in to the daily operations and demands of their jobs. Often larger macro issues of social justice seem either insurmountable or irrelevant when faced with a client in crisis. Yet all those daily interactions combine to form a picture of the injustices within our communities and we are reminded of our ethical responsibility to act in developing a more socially just

society. A belief in social justice is a link throughout all facets of social work, no matter the work environment or setting. All of the participants in this study either directly or indirectly referenced what they were doing with social enterprises as an act of social justice. If their income generated went to support their operations, they saw that as financing work they were truly passionate about and knew needed doing. If their programs created opportunities for marginalized people, they saw that as rectifying one of myriad of imbalances people with barriers face. Social work has an inherent responsibility to look at all options and developments in working towards social justice. Knowledge about how social enterprises can affect non-profit organizations can inform policymaking and direct practice at a variety of levels. An increase in knowledge based in research has direct benefits for clients (Guo, 2006). If social enterprises have this potential, then social work has a role to play in this discourse.

## **5.7 Recommendations for Future Research**

The tension around a more market-based environment for delivering social services is one that merits more investigation in the face of a potential increase in government cutbacks. It is important to look at how this practice is reflected in the general populations' approach and viewpoints on social work services. Are we moving to a more neo-liberal society? Are middle and upper-class taxpayers tired of paying for social services, especially in areas they are not directly affected by, or resources they don't often access? Are social enterprises an innovative response developed by non-profit organizations, or are they yet another example of government abdicating its responsibility to support citizens through relevant organizations and programming? Is it socially or morally just to have people in need while this philosophical debate unfolds?

Because only one social worker was interviewed, it presents a series of questions unanswered by this study: Is this a gap in training for social workers? Is it a lack of awareness or a conscious choice not to work in agencies developing businesses? Does it reflect a general migration out of non-profits to roles in government and health care? Is there a lack of social workers in upper management?

My personal experience reflects some gaps when looking at the role of universities in preparing social work students to interact with social enterprises run by non-profit organizations. Skills such as reading financial statements and contracts for service, responding to calls for proposals by being able to write proposals and articulate measurable outcomes, and how to develop programs to meet identified client needs, are all practical social work skills that translate directly to developing or working within social enterprises. Core classes that offer management skills to support social workers to take on leadership roles within community or government organizations also offer relevant skills that transfer easily to other realms. Including a module that explores all the players within the non-profit sector through the use of case studies – social enterprises, government agencies, non-profit organizations, religious institutions, multi-service organizations, etc – would offer students a clear overview of both employment options and referral possibilities for clients. The incorporation of some of these skills may help address the lack of social workers working in diverse settings, and offer strength and dynamic possibilities for the profession.

## **5.8 Study Limitations**

This study was necessarily narrow in its approach. Focusing specifically on women leaders of non-profit organizations running social enterprises it naturally left out

men in the examination. It did not examine social enterprises that were not successful or who were forced to close, therefore an understanding about the downfalls and challenges of social enterprises is limited by the positive experiences that were common among participants. Only one social worker was interviewed in this study, limiting the amount of data directly from a social worker's perspective. As this was a descriptive study, aimed at providing an overview and unpacking preliminary questions around the issue of social enterprises, there is substantial subject matter for subsequent research that could focus on specific issues or with a much narrower approach.

## CHAPTER 6 Conclusion

The emergence of social enterprises in the realm of social work offers new directions of professional practice. The findings from this study suggest that social enterprises have the potential to address funding challenges and fill unique program voids for clients. Social work is inherently a profession with a focus on developing more socially just communities, and the participants in this study shared stories of achieving social justice goals through their development of social enterprises.

From a personal perspective, this study has inspired me as a social worker to explore innovative ways of practice, whether as an entry-level case worker or as an executive director. Listening to stories of women who bring a strong sense of agency to their work and who have developed unique ways of engaging in systemic change seem to me the very essence of the profession, and the very core of the creative aspects of social work.

Jeff Skoll, one of the founders of E-Bay, the Skoll Foundation, and the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford University, said the following: “I believe that social entrepreneurship will be the driving force in the world over the next 100 years – the single biggest movement that’s going to change the way we live.” (as cited by Palmer, 2010). Whether it’s true or not, this comment may be very divisive among social workers causing strong opinions either way. The relevance of this statement cannot be denied. It is coming from all areas of society and social enterprises are a rapidly growing reality. Social enterprises are a new dimension of practice, an area of growth for the profession as we move in to a changing era of funding and programming possibilities.

Expanding the professional dialogue by social workers will allow social work to make informed choices in something that has the potential to become a permanent fixture in the social service landscape.



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## Appendix A - Examples of Social Enterprises

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Social Enterprise</b>
Atira Women's Resource Society	Vancouver	Property Management/Painting Company
Battered Women's Support Services	Vancouver	Thrift stores/Fee-for-Training
Coast Mental Health	Vancouver	Landscaping/Sewing Services
Co-Development Canada	Vancouver	Café Etico Coffee
Compassion Club	Vancouver	Pharmacy
Developmental Disabilities Association	Richmond	Bulk Sales of Used Clothing/Employment Programs for people with Disabilities
Directions – SYJA	Vancouver	Employment Program
Fraserside Community Services Society	New Westminster	Moving Services
H.A.V.E. Café	Vancouver	Café and Training Program
Just Beginnings Flowers	Vancouver	Flower store and Floristry School
Kla-How-Eya	Surrey	Culinary Training Program/Elders Art Sales
Lookout Society (The)	Vancouver	Graffiti Removal/Community Clean-Up
Megaphone Street Newspaper	Vancouver	Employment Opportunities
Mission Possible	Vancouver	Graffiti Removal/Community Clean-Up
Pivot Legal Society	Vancouver	Legal Services/Calendars/Rights Cards
Price Pro Groceries	Surrey	Grocery Store/Employment Opportunities
Public Dreams Society	Vancouver	Imaginate/Event Coordination
Quest Food Services	Vancouver	Catering
Social Policy and Research Council of BC	Burnaby	Research and Consulting/Parking Permit administration
South Fraser Women's Services	Surrey	Concierge Services
SOS Children's Charities	Cloverdale	Thrift Stores
Tradeworks	Vancouver	Custom Handicrafts
United We Can	Vancouver	Recycling Program
Vancouver Native Health	Vancouver	VASE/E-Commerce Services
Vancouver Farmer's Markets	Vancouver	Merchandise
Vancouver Women's Health Collective	Vancouver	Lu's Pharmacy for Women
YWCA	Vancouver	Gym/Hotel

## **Appendix B - An Overview of Basic Legal Information for Social Enterprises**

### *Charitable Status*

The Income Tax Act and related policy statements from the Canadian Revenue Agency (CRA) govern the activities of non-profit organizations with charitable status (also known as ‘charities’). For an organization to qualify for charitable status, it must demonstrate activities that fall in to one of the following categories: relief of poverty; advancement of education; advancement of religion; and other purposes beneficial to the community. These guide the CRA in making decisions in regards to the business activities of charities. It is permitted for charities to engage in business activities that directly accomplish or advance an organizations’ stated mission, provided it is deemed “related”. The activities are considered to be a business if they generate a profit, or intend to generate a profit at some point (Enterprising Non-Profits, 2005; Parliamentary Information and Research Service, 2006).

### *Related Businesses*

“Related” businesses can fall be classified in two ways: businesses that are linked to a charity’s purpose *and* subordinate to that purpose; and businesses that are run substantially by volunteers.

Four forms of links are recognized by the CRA:

- Businesses that are a usual and concomitant of charitable programs – including activities needed to effectively operate, e.g.: hospital parking lots, university bookstores.

- An off-shoot of a core charitable program – including selling of recordings of church Christmas concerts.
- A use of excess capacity – renting out boardroom space when not in use.
- The sale of items that promote the charity – any merchandise designed to advertise the organization and its work.

There are four factors considered by the CRA when evaluating whether a business is subservient to the dominant charitable purpose:

1. The business activity draws a minor portion of the charity's attention and resources.
2. The business part of the operations.
3. Charitable goals dominate the decision making of the organization.
4. The organization remains exclusively for a charitable purpose, with no element of private benefit (Enterprising Non-Profits, 2005; Parliamentary Information and Research Service, 2006).