THE EXPERIENCE OF CAREER
FOR
WOMEN WHO OWN BUSINESSES
by
LOUISE CHIVERS
B.A. University of British Columbia, 1989

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF ARTS
in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
Counselling Psychology
WE ACCEPT THIS THESIS AS CONFORMING
TO THE REQUIRED STANDARD

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
September, 1995
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Department of Counselling Psychology - Education.
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

Date Oct 13, 95
A qualitative phenomenological paradigm was utilized to explore the experience and meaning of career for women who own businesses. Ten women who owned businesses participated in this study. During individual, in-depth interviews, which were audio-taped, each woman described her experience of career as a business owner and told the story of how she came to own a business. The women reported that they experienced their careers evolving interdependently with their development as women, and the needs of their families. Nine common themes were drawn from the data using a thematic analysis procedure devised by Colaizzi (1978). The nine themes identified were: a sense of career as a representation of self; a sense of struggle to achieve a balanced life; the desire for or need for recognition or validation from themselves and others; a sense of being unique; a strong sense of independence and autonomy; the need for an interactive relationship with their environment; a strong sense of accountability for the progress, success and failure of their businesses; a sense of being influenced by the support or lack of support from others; and a strong sense of connection with and contribution to others through their work.
Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the encouragement and support of my friends and family throughout the duration of my Master's degree, and especially during the process of writing this thesis. I am especially indebted to my wonderful daughters, Kayla and Seron, for their amazing patience and helpfulness during this long and challenging period of our lives. I also want to thank Elli Tamarin and Sarah Sample for their wonderful support and encouragement.

A very special thank you is in order to my thesis supervisor, Judith Daniluk, for her support, suggestions and encouragement. Her professional guidance and compassionate reassurance enabled me to continue and complete this research project and thesis during times when it seemed impossible.

I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Richard Young and Dr. Wendy Frisby, for their support and contributions to the quality of this research.

Finally, without the ten women who generously volunteered their time and stories in this study this research project could not have happened. I appreciate their openness and honesty and feel honored to have met them. To each one I am sincerely thankful.
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Pat H. - Studio 54 Photography
Juliet - Leaf Clothing
Margaret - M. A. Angus Counselling Services Inc.
Dawna - Stratcom Planning Inc.
Pat D. Descheneaux Recruiting Services Ltd.
Marie - MG Originals
Marzena - MPI
Sydney - Apparel Inc.
Penny - Design Consulting
Renate - General Insurance Brokerage

Common Themes

A sense of career as a representation of the self.
A sense of struggle to achieve a balanced life.
The desire for or need for recognition or validation from themselves and others.
A sense of being unique.
A strong sense of independence and autonomy.
The need for an interactive relationship with their environment.
A strong sense of accountability for the progress, success and failure of their business.
A sense of being influenced by the support or lack of support from others.  
A strong sense of connection with and contribution to others through their work.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

During the past 20 years there have been significant changes with respect to the participation and aspirations of women in the paid labour force. Among the most obvious changes are the increase in women's overall involvement and the length of time women spend in the paid labour force, which is now comparable to men. In the early 1960's two-thirds of Canadian families consisted of breadwinner husbands and wives at home. Today fewer than one in six Canadian families fits this description (Bennett & Humphage, 1989).

In 1988, women constituted 44% of the paid labour force, accounting for almost three-quarters of its growth (Statistics Canada). Last year, 52% of women had jobs, up from 42% in 1976. The increase came as the proportion of men with jobs dropped to 65% from 76% (Bell, 1995). In spite of these gains, the distribution of women in the various industries and occupational categories shows that there is on-going segregation. In 1994, 70% of all women in the labour force were in clerical, sales, or service occupations (Bell, 1995).

Women make up the majority of the service industry's labour
succeed, or remain in business for five years or longer, then businesses owned by men (Businesswomen's Advocate, 1991). It would appear that in one area at least things are looking more optimistic for women in terms of career opportunities and advancement - business ownership.

**Why some women leave corporations**

In order to understand the relationship between women's career options and their choices as they apply to the phenomenon of women business owners and their dramatic increase in numbers, it is important to explain why traditional organisations are not attracting or retaining women with business proficiency and achievement goals.

Women face four primary obstacles when trying to achieve positions of power or influence within organisations and/or satisfaction with their work. These are gender stereotyping, occupational segregation, sexual harassment and difficulties with networking. The following section will discuss these barriers as they pertain to women in the business sector.

Despite the dramatic increase in the number of working women in the last two decades, women are still under-represented in positions of power and responsibility. According to Anderson (1991), although women make up forty-four percent of the Canadian work force only two percent of Canadian executives are women. In the
business world, female managers often fail to advance past mid-level positions. Women who make it to senior managerial positions rarely become officers or have any operating responsibilities. They predominantly hold personnel or legal positions, remaining in what is popularly known by women in these positions as the “velvet ghetto” (Mirabella, 1988, p. 18).

According to Bradsher (1988), the slow rate of progress of women in the business sector provides, “clear evidence of nothing less than the abiding sexism of corporations” (p. 1). The lack of advancement is evidence of women encountering a glass ceiling, a concept developed “to describe a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up the management hierarchy” (Morrison & Van Glinow, 1990, p. 200).

According to O'Leary and Ickovics (1992), the glass ceiling is a result of gender stereotyping. Gender stereotypes, derived from the sexual division of labour, constitute normative beliefs to which people tend to conform or are pressured to conform (Eagly, 1987). For example, in a review of the research literature on attitudes and behaviours toward women workers, Kahn and Crosby (1985) found that male managers frequently commit a fundamental attribution error by assuming that the nurturant and submissive behaviours of
their female secretaries result from the women's personality characteristics, not the role requirements imposed upon them by their work situations. As a result, the typical manager may not think of his secretary as a candidate for promotion into the managerial ranks.

When women do enter the management areas they are generally greeted with occupational segregation (Kahn & Crosby, 1985; O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992). The largest number of female managers (38%) is employed in the service sector (O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992). Segregating women into 'women's work' in staff rather than line positions effectively keeps them out of top management. It isolates women from the power-holders and places them outside the direct path to the top (Larwood & Gattiker, 1987). As a result, female intensive occupations have limited career mobility. For example, an employee can not move from Catering Director to Hotel General Manager in the hotel business (O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992). Consequently, women have fewer total occupational status gains over the course of their career. This means lower earnings, reduced on-the-job training, and less value and status. Women in female-intensive occupations are likely to achieve maximum status in a relatively short period of time (Powell, 1988). A woman with a desire to achieve and be financially successful may
find occupational segregation with its resulting inequities frustrating and demeaning. She may choose to use her management strengths and knowledge of business to further her own interests as a self-employed contractor in her field.

Furthermore, relegating women to women's work is an effective way to structurally isolate them which impacts on other aspects of employee relations. For example, the sex ratio in an occupation, job, or work group is associated with the incidence of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of women occurs more frequently in groups where the ratio of males to females ranges from 85:15 to 99:01, than in groups where there is a more balanced sex ratio (Gutek, 1985). Sexual harassment can isolate women through intimidation, coercion, and discrimination. It keeps women out of top management by demeaning their status as workers. In these situations of sexual intimidation, women's workplace relationships become based on sexuality rather than on professionalism (Kahn & Crosby, 1985; O'Leary & Ickovics, 1992). Given their numbers, women in management are likely to suffer from a higher incidence of sexual harassment (Clarke, 1988; Gutek, 1985).

Networking is considered a crucial aspect of success in professional careers (Hennig & Jardim, 1977; Moore, Buttner, & Rosen, 1992). Networks usually involve contacts with a variety of
colleagues for the purpose of mutual work benefits. Much of this ‘old boys’ system is dependent upon informal interactions involving favours, persuasion, and connections to people who already have influence (Hennig & Jardim, 1977). The distribution of power between men and women in the workplace affects the nature of their informal networks. In their review of the literature that looks at networks and the effect of the distribution of power, O’Leary and Ickovics (1992) found that women in male-dominated offices often criticise other women for not being good role models, for being too much like a man and for failing to identify with women, while women in offices with at least fifteen percent women tend to see other women as supportive and helpful. Without access to networks women are at a disadvantage in the workplace, yet, networks are unfriendly to women as long as the distribution of power is unequal.

In summary, there are four primary and interrelated obstacles to women’s achievement of power and satisfaction in the workplace. Gender stereotyping, occupational segregation, sexual harassment and disadvantages in networking make traditional organisations difficult for business women. Looking at these obstacles one can see that they provide a picture of the male-dominated business world still inhospitable to women. These are some of the reasons women are leaving their corporate employers. Many business women report
being frustrated with working under the 'glass ceiling' and are disillusioned with corporate hierarchy. Some women seeking a career alternative to the corporate track have chosen business ownership in response to such obstacles.

The Growing Number of Businesses Owned by Women

Given these barriers to power and work satisfaction, increasingly, women are seeking professional growth outside the corporation. It appears to be easier for women to move into the most powerful positions in business by bypassing the corporate ladder altogether and gaining requisite business experience outside the corporation in their own entrepreneurial endeavours (Hisrich, 1990; Wente, 1990).

Statistics Canada indicates the number of self-employed women in British Columbia in 1991 has risen to 77,000 from 62,000 in 1986. This is triple the growth rate of self-employed men over the same period. Studies from the office of the BC Businesswomen's Advocate (1991) show that female-owned businesses are more likely to succeed (remain operational for five years or longer) than male-owned businesses. Similarly in the U.S., female women business owners are the fastest growing segment of the small business population. Since 1980 their numbers have increased dramatically; by 1992 women comprised 28% of all U.S. businesses (Moore,

Business ownership is promoted by governments worldwide as a viable economic alternative for employment of disadvantaged groups such as immigrants and women (Birley, 1985). Business ownership can also be considered a “breakaway occupation that provides women with an opportunity to move out of stereotypical and perhaps subservient occupations they entered earlier in their lives” (Young & Richards, 1992, p. 119). Yet, to date the data regarding women who own businesses is limited and often based on small and convenient samples (Moore, Buttner, & Rosen, 1992).

The Purpose of the Study

It is important to study the career experience of women who own businesses at this time because it is a relatively unexplored area that is strongly influenced by the era and Zeitgeist in which it is occurring. Corporate sex bias with its glass ceiling, low earnings, and limited value and status for the work done by women have made the corporate world dissatisfying to many women. The lack of progress for women in the corporate world is causing women to increasingly leave their jobs to create their own businesses. New research is necessary to help explain this phenomenon and provide more understanding of the meaning and experience of career for women who own businesses.
The literature on women and career in general has yet to create a satisfying theory of women's career development. Researchers working in this field have stressed a need for more exploration into the unique barriers for women in terms of career as well as the multiple factors that influence women in their career choices (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Gallos, 1989). They claim that women's career theory must explore career as expressed over a lifetime, and describe and seek to understand the interplay between career and family and relationships for women. These theorists claim that it is important to explore career strides women are taking when considering what career means to women.

This researcher is interested in enriching the literature that explores the career experiences of the woman who owns her own business. By taking a phenomenological approach to exploration, this study will provide an intensive focus on the participants' subjective experience as business owners, and the meaning they make of their experience. It is important to explore and describe this topic from the subjective point of view at this time because the literature on women who own businesses is at an early stage of development and tends to be fragmented and unrelated, focusing mainly on demographics and differences from men who own businesses (Moore, 1990).
The question that will guide this research is: What is the experience of career for women who own businesses? This study will provide a vehicle for the participants to describe their experiences of business ownership. By allowing women to describe their experiences they may gain a sense of connection with other women, allowing them to appreciate their potential as role models for other women and for being part of a supportive network.

In describing the career experience of women who have chosen business ownership I hope to begin to understand how these women experience and make sense of their career lives. This study may contribute to the literature on women who own businesses by providing descriptions and other relevant themes concerning the experiences of these women.

Definitions

The terms "business owner" and "entrepreneur" are often used interchangeably in the literature. In an effort to separate the significance of small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures to the American economy, Carland, Hoy, Boulton and Carland (1982) sought to differentiated the small business owner from the entrepreneur. According to Carland et al. the small business owner is:

an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of furthering personal goals. The business
must be the primary source of income and will consume the majority of one's time and resources. The owner perceives the business as an extension of his or her personality, intricately bound with family needs and desires (p. 358).

The same theorists claim the entrepreneur is:

an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of profit and growth. The entrepreneur is characterised principally by innovative behavior and will employ strategic management practices in the business (p. 358).

The entrepreneurial venture can be identified by the strategic behaviour of the firms. This innovative and strategic behavior of the entrepreneur includes introduction of new goods, introduction of new markets of production, opening of new markets and new sources of supply and industrial reorganisation, according to Carland et al.

According to the criteria set out by Carland et al. the women in the present study would best qualify as small business owners. However, some literature on women in business uses the terms interchangeably. In a effort to be true to the literature throughout this thesis the term “business owner” will be used unless a theorist or researcher has used the term “entrepreneurs” when referring simply to women who own businesses.
According to Gallos (1989) definitions of career are still heavily based on men's traditional work experiences and assumptions about the primacy of work to identity. This thesis will use the first two definitions of career from the Funk & Wagnalls Canadian College Dictionary (1986) for its working definitions of career. Throughout this thesis the term career denotes “1. The course or progress of a person's life, or some portion of it, especially as related to some noteworthy activity or pursuit. 2. One's life work, occupation, profession.” (p. 206)

However, the initial and validation interviews of this study were conducted without defining the word career for the participants. This allowed the women to self define the word career in an effort to permit the shared meaning of career to emerge from the thematic data.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Career Development for Women

To help form an understanding of the phenomena of women choosing business ownership it is important to explore the theoretical literature on career development for women. According to Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), there is yet to be a satisfactory theory of career development of women in general. The traditional theories of Holland, Roe, Super and others were developed with men in mind (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Although they may provide some understanding of career behaviour in general, they are lacking in the areas that pertain specifically to women. For example, these theories tend to depict career development as continuous, linear and stage-sequential, equating career with paid employment and emphasising vocational roles over personal and familial roles.

According to Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), the study of women's career development to date has involved taking into account the expectation that women's lives will usually include the roles of homemaking and childrearing. Since the assumption of competing roles was not considered in the study of male career development, the research on men could focus on the content of career choice without considering other dependent variables. The study of
women's career development is, therefore, inherently more complex. Researchers and theorists must address barriers unique to women and develop approaches to explore the multiple factors that influence women in their career choices.

Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) claim that the approaches of Astin (1984), Farmer (1985), Gottfredson (1981), Hackett and Betz (1981), and Harmon (1977) have been admirable attempts to address the lack of theory and study focusing specifically on women, but that there is a need for additional and more comprehensive theories in the area of women's career development. They maintain that advances in understanding will require theoretical innovation and synthesis to continue.

Gallos (1989) concurs with these authors and suggests that women's career development is not a linear progression of attainments directed by a focus on the top, or a job sequence aimed at upward mobility and success at all costs. But neither is it job complacency, fear of professional success, low need for achievement, nor simply a mechanical issue of learning how to juggle marriage, children and work. In Gallos' review of the women and career development literature she concludes that women's boundaries between professional work and the rest of their lives are more permeable than men's, allowing women to see relationships and
family as critical to work and as reasons to pace their professional lives differently from men. Gallos claims that 'career' for women means expressing their professional selves over a lifetime, and having the patience and confidence to design a satisfying personal and professional life for themselves.

Based on her review of the literature, Gallos (1989) concludes that few women feel reassured of their womanhood by occupational and professional success alone. Those who solely achieve professional success may feel anxious about their femininity and wonder what they have sacrificed. Hennig and Jardim (1978) interviewed forty-five senior female managers and found that these successful women devised strategies at mid-life that put their careers on hold while they reassessed their personal lives, becoming focused on intimate relationships for the first time.

Eight years later Hardesty and Jacobs’s (1986) exploration of women in corporate America found that professionally successful women in the corporate ranks needed more than professional achievements to feel successful. These women reported frustration, emptiness, exhaustion, disillusionment and a sense of personal failure. They wanted fair treatment and compensation, and most importantly, they wanted opportunities to be themselves at work and to be connected with the other people around them. They were
unable to find this in their corporate positions so they reassessed their career and life priorities, and made career shifts or turned to self-employment.

Giele (1982) criticises the linear models of development for being too narrow for women. She reviewed the historical change in women's roles, the research on women's health and status attainments, and the developments in family roles and the workplace over the last thirty years in an effort to discover what life events and chronological life phases lead to a satisfying and healthy life for women. She found evidence for a 'crossover model' that acknowledges the relativity of specific life paths and places a positive value on the number and variety of life experiences rather than any particular sequence, event, or activity. According to Giele, good education, work, and family experience, in any order, serve a woman better than decisions that cut off life options too early or prevent flexible adaption later in life.

Baruch, Barnett and Rivers (1983) interviewed 300 women in mid-life to discover what is critical for women in leading a satisfying life. They found that combining achievement and accomplishment with pleasure is critical to women. Pleasure for these women centred on the quality of their relationships with others. Gallos (1982) concurs that the recurring themes in women's career choices are the
need to manage the attachments, relationships and accomplishments that weave through women’s life phases.

Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) claim that more research is needed to explore the factors important in the area of women’s self-concept development. They indicate that if women are to have “truly free, truly fitting career choices” (p. 251), they require self-knowledge and positive self-validation. Gallos (1989) affirms this and points out that women have learned that identity and self-esteem do not necessarily come from loyalty to a prestigious corporation. She claims that for more and more women this means starting entrepreneurial ventures, ventures whose growth the women can coordinate with their shifting family and relationship responsibilities.

Gallos (1989) also suggests that career theorists and researchers need to describe the meaning of career for successful women in order to broaden our understanding about career success for both men and women. She concludes that studies are needed that record the career strides women are taking while examining the importance of a balanced life for women’s self-esteem and feelings of well-being.

The Female Business Owner or The Entrepreneurial Woman

The female business owner is not a new phenomenon. However, there are several differences between the business owning
woman of twenty years ago and the entrepreneurial woman of today. Moore, Buttner, and Rosen (1992) claim that, historically, female entrepreneurs have faced limited access to capital, management experience and business and technical education. Gregg (1985) defines the “Traditional” (p. 88) female entrepreneur as a person with a liberal arts background whose business focused on domestic services and skills. According to Bowen and Hisrich (1986) she was unlikely to do business in the male-dominated industries. The ‘traditional’s’ lack of business experience caused problems obtaining loans. Moore et al. state, “her liberal arts background, domestic orientation, and limited access to capital led her into sole proprietor service businesses that tended to be low income, low equity, small, and slow growing” (p. 88). It is important to address this group of entrepreneurial women because, according to the Women in Business survey (Businesswomen’s Advocate, 1991), the majority of women - nearly 60% - still choose to start businesses within the service industry, and face the problems and limits experienced by the ‘traditional’.

A new group of female entrepreneurs began to appear in the 1980s. These second generation entrepreneurs (Gregg, 1985) fit Drucker’s (1986) narrower definition of an entrepreneur, one who “drastically upgrades the yield from resources and creates new
markets and a new customer.” They are innovative, creative, exercise authority and control, and have matching professional expertise.

In a review of the literature exploring corporate women and entrepreneurship, Moore et al. (1992) found that the desire for independence, freedom from discrimination and the ambition for success are inspiring many more women to give up the corporate track and choose entrepreneurship. Unlike the ‘traditional’, many of these women use their previous organisational environments as incubators to provide them with training and contacts. Moore et al. claim that the modern female business owner is likely to be a corporate owner with prior business experience and a strong drive for independence. She was probably part of a large organisation and became disillusioned with the corporate career path or was confronted with limited advancement opportunities or with corporate downsizing.

Moore et al. (1992) call this new generation of female business owners “The New Moderns” (p. 89). Between 1977 to 1982 the highest annual growth rates of female operated businesses occurred in the segment represented by the New Moderns (Moore et al.). They differ from the ‘Traditional’ in that they come prepared with technical and planning skills, a network of contacts, and an orientation to make money and create new markets. These business
owners may own businesses in areas traditionally dominated by men. For example, a U.S. government population report Taeuber and Valdisera (1986) found that within the major industry divisions of agricultural services, forestry and fishing, mining, construction, and manufacturing, the growth of female owned businesses exceeded that of the industry as a whole (cited in Moore et al., 1992).

It is important to acknowledge the gains of this second generation of entrepreneurial women because they are the fastest growing segment of the small business population. They also challenge the stereotypes that continue to shadow and obstruct women’s businesses. For example, if these business owners have trouble obtaining loans it may not be due to their lack of business experience.

The following studies look at entrepreneurial women, both ‘Traditional’ and ‘New Moderns’, and provide details concerning demographics, motivations, personality profiles, as well as business details and other background information that was gathered using surveys. These studies provide us with a general background of the entrepreneurial women and her business.

In 1982, Hisrich and Brush (1988) surveyed 468 entrepreneurial women from the United States. The methodology consisted of a mixture of scaled, dichotomous, multiple answer, open,
and ranking questions. The survey assessed the motivation for starting a business, general demographic characteristics, management skills, social and psychological factors, educational and occupational influences, and overall business data. In addition, they conducted a follow-up study in 1986 to measure the growth and change in the businesses.

They found that female entrepreneurs tended to be 35-45 year old first-born children from middle to upper class families. They were well-educated with well-educated, financially successful and supportive spouses. They had some work experience before launching their careers but very few had upper level management experience or mid level positions in financial or operating areas. They tended to operate ventures in areas traditional to women - 90% of the ventures were service-related businesses.

Scott (1986) surveyed 154 women who owned businesses in the state of Georgia and replicated Hisrich and Brush's findings. Only in the area of education was there any differences. Sixty-eight percent of the Hisrich et al. respondents had attended college or graduate school compared to eight-six percent of the Georgians surveyed by Scott.

The entrepreneurs of Hisrich and Brush (1988) and Scott (1986) fit the profile of the 'Traditional' as described by Moore,
Few of these entrepreneurs created new markets or started businesses based on product or service innovations. Their business problems were due to their lack of financial skill with 87% citing financial problems and lack of experience in financial planning as their biggest problem.

Hisrich (1986) developed a theory of female entrepreneurs' careers based on questionnaire and interview data collected from 468 women from United States, 39 from The Republic of Ireland, 11 from Northern Ireland, and 30 from Puerto Rico. He found that regardless of culture, entrepreneurial women tended to be well-educated, motivated by achievement, and energetic.

Neider (1987) describes the demographic and personality characteristics of female entrepreneurs and the organisational characteristics of their businesses. Fifty-two women were interviewed and 40 of the participants completed two psychological tests - Rotter's Locus of Control Scale and the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS). Neider observed the operation of the women's companies as a third data collection method. She found that "personal crisis" initiated twenty of the fifty-two women into owning their business and all these women were over fifty years old. All these crises were related to marriage (divorce, death of a spouse, husband's bankruptcy, etc.). In the other thirty-two cases, all under
the age of fifty - the reasons for start-up tended to involve “personal satisfaction” issues. None of the women in Neider’s study mentioned money as a primary motivation for starting a business.

The business owners in Neider’s study scored low on Rotter’s Locus of Control Scale, significantly lower than the general female population. This indicates an internal locus of control which reflects the belief that one can control one’s life. The EPPS scores for the women in this study were particularly high in the five need areas: Endurance, Dominance, Achievement, Intraception (need to analyse the motives of others and predict behaviour), and Autonomy. Therefore, according to Neider, the typical female entrepreneur is very independent, has a high need for achievement and control over the activities of others, and is action-oriented and will persist at a job until it is accomplished successfully.

Neider found that 92 percent of her participants benefited from male mentors from prior jobs. All but two of her subjects used personal funds for start-up costs. The two major problems reported by Neider’s entrepreneurs were their inability to delegate and personal life versus career tension.

Longstreth, Stafford, and Maudlin (1987) surveyed 114 women who owned businesses either full- or half-time, to explore the time constraints of self-employed women. They found that although the
full-time owners spent more than twice the amount of time in their businesses (45.93 hours per week) than the half-time owners, they spent a similar amount of time on household work (6 hours per day). However, the husbands and older children of the full-time entrepreneurs spent less time in housework than those of the half-time business owners. Longstreth et al. suggest that this is an outcome of full-time owners having less time to supervise. Full-time business owners were no more likely to hire help to do housework than the half-time owners and less likely to hire help for maintenance and yard work.

Moore, Buttner, and Rosen (1992) discuss the phenomenon of women leaving large companies to start their own businesses. They address the frustration experienced by women who work in large organisations. They describe how some women try to reach their full potential while experiencing a high degree of autonomy by taking the entrepreneurial route, only to find that this path to success and independence also has many impediments. For example, funding barriers for women in nontraditional businesses, such as banking, construction and engineering were found.

Moore et al. (1992) describe barriers for the female entrepreneur embedded in the law codes and structures of economic and financial institutions. For example, the legal rights of women are
still not the same in all states in the U.S., and are seldom equivalent to the rights of men. Constraints on women's rights of ownership, management, and control of real property pose special problems. The authors offer insights into what it takes for women to make a success of their independent businesses and how various agencies can encourage and facilitate women's entrepreneurial choices.

The Experience of Business Ownership for Women

While the previous studies tell us something about the background, motivations, obstacles and businesses of entrepreneurial women, they tell us little about the experience of business ownership for women. The following studies use phenomenological methodologies to explore different aspects of the experience of business ownership for women.

Goffee and Scase (1985) interviewed 44 female business owners in an effort to study the experiences of entrepreneurial women. They sought to discover the motives for, and the consequences of, business ownership for women. They were also curious to discover the extent to which these women were able to achieve greater degrees of self-determination or freedom from various forms of gender-based subordination through business proprietorship.

To provide a framework for discussion Goffee and Scase
differentiated their participants according to their attitudes toward profit-making and the extent to which they were prepared to accept or reject conventionally defined female roles. Four types of business owners were identified. "Conventional businesswomen" (p. 61) create ventures in those sectors of the economy where there are a high concentration of women employees and women managers. They have a high commitment to entrepreneurial ideals and conventional gender roles and tend to have conflicts between their home and business lives. The "domestic traders" (p. 63) tend to engage in activities which are traditionally regarded as women's work. They have a high commitment to conventional gender roles but a low commitment to entrepreneurial or business ideals. They are married and their businesses tend to provide their family with a secondary income.

In contrast, the "innovative entrepreneurs" (p. 62) explicitly reject conventional gender relationships and are highly committed to personal achievement through business success. They tend to own businesses in the post-war growth areas of graduate female employment, such as market research, public relations and publishing. "The innovative entrepreneurs do not change the system, they beat it by joining it" (p. 138). The "radical proprietors" (p. 64), however, regard their business activities as part of a collective
struggle which offer services to other women in ways compatible with feminist ideology. They have a low commitment to both conventional entrepreneurial ideals and traditional gender roles. They co-own and collectively organise their enterprises in an effort to provide themselves with spheres of autonomy free from male domination.

Goffee and Scase (1985) differentiate four types of business owners in order to describe the various experiences of women business owners. They summarise their findings by emphasising that women share a number of common problems with men in business start-up and management as well as quite distinctive gender-related problems. Goffee and Scase ask policy makers and small business advisors to recognise the sharp contrasts in motivations and goals among women.

Chaganti (1986) presents eight case studies in order to explore the management styles of women who owned businesses in Pennsylvania. She found that women find entrepreneurship attractive in order to minimise or to escape social or organisational barriers to success. Five of her participants operated businesses in the traditionally female-dominated service area, while the other three operated non-traditional ventures. These three continually felt they had to prove they were better than their male competitors,
The women interviewed in Chaganti’s (1986) study expressed the desire to see their businesses become the best in their areas and displayed tenacity and drive in making their businesses successful. They capitalised on being customer oriented, finding niches, and establishing “credible market images” (p. 26). They emphasised superior customer service and innovative or unique products or services. They all had difficulty procuring capital in the start-up phase. They tended to take courses in areas such as financial management and business planning. According to Chaganti, female entrepreneurs tend to prefer a more “people-oriented” and less autocratic management style, compared to their male counterparts.

Young and Richards (1992) endeavour to explain the relationship between “one’s notion of self and one’s career experience as a small business owner” (p. 119). To this end they explore the meaning of the career experiences of female entrepreneurs and the way in which these women formulate the meaning of relationships within those experiences. Young and Richards use descriptive narrative research methodology while interviewing the thirteen 32-55 years old participants of this study. The study is hermeneutical because it seeks to interpret the texts of the narratives, and it refers to efforts to address the particular historical and sociopolitical
context in which the social phenomenon of entrepreneurial women is brought about.

Young and Richards (1992) found that each woman’s experience as a small business owner allowed for a type of work to be undertaken that she sees as more consistent with herself as a woman while enabling the woman to utilise a relational perspective. They found that the women interviewed experienced owning and operating a business as personally satisfying and instrumental in increasing their sense of agency. In all cases the women used a relational framework to construct their narratives with their experience of entrepreneurship representing human interdependence in some fashion or another.

The women in Young and Richards’ study expressed a “sense of confidence, personal responsibility, and positive attitudes toward risk and adventure in regard to establishing their businesses” (p. 126). They appreciated the support derived from their relationships, which included partnerships, mentors, networks and friendships. Lack of interpersonal support was considered an important motivation to establish a business for a few of the participants in the study.

Many of the women in Young and Richards’ study considered the maintenance of their relationships the most important aspect of
being in business. Good relationships with employees and customers were considered more important than profit. The opportunity to create a more desirable human environment and improve the quality of working life added meaning to business ownership for the women. However, being in business also had the effect of creating tension between the women and their husbands or other family members.

The women who participated in Young and Richards' (1992) study experienced personal fulfilment and a sense of agency being entrepreneurs. They described feelings of success that were contingent on a belief in oneself. The women in the study experienced entrepreneurship as providing them with a sense of accomplishment, autonomy, flexibility, as well as an integral sense of self.

Young and Richards' study addresses the experience of entrepreneurship as it relates to a relational perspective and, therefore, provides the present study with important information. It is likely that the present study, because of its similar topic and methodology, will replicate some of Young and Richards' findings.

In her analysis of the literature on women business owners, Brush (1989) concluded that the studies generally examine the individual, focus on demographics, psychological characteristics, education, and occupational background. Given the growth in the
number of women-owned businesses and the differences from those owned by males, Brush recommends that further research should incorporate attention to social context as well as psychological factors. Moore (1990) describes the status of the research on the female entrepreneur as fragmented, unrelated, and at the initial stage of paradigm development. Research on female entrepreneurs is clearly at a very early stage of development, particularly on this new group of female entrepreneurs.
CHAPTER THREE

Method

Design

Phenomenological psychological research has as its roots the philosophies of existentialism and phenomenology. Husserl (1970), the founder of phenomenology, used critical reflection and description to study the structures of human consciousness. He reasoned that an understanding of human consciousness is crucial to an understanding of human knowledge (Osborne, 1990). His famous dictum "unto the things themselves" means that to discover the nature of something the investigator must go to the thing itself. According to Giorgi (1985) this means the phenomenological research psychologist must "go to the everyday world where people are living through various phenomena in actual situations" (p. 8) for their information. To research the lived experience of independent careers for women from a phenomenological perspective, I obtained direct descriptions of the women’s experience.

According to phenomenological reasoning, "reality is both construed by the subject and mirrored from the object out-there" (Osborne, 1990, p. 80). Person-object dualism, the cornerstone of experimental psychology, is eliminated by this notion. Rather, from a
phenomenological perspective "objectivity is fidelity to phenomena" (Colaizzi, 1978, p.52), not a condition made possible by experimental methodological constraints. In terms of methods, this means that for the phenomenological psychologist to be objective, she must listen to, recognise, and affirm the experience of others, and she must treat her own experience in the same fashion.

The phenomenological mode of exploration is particularly appropriate for studying lived experiences that have been subject to biases and omissions (Giorgi, 1985), making this approach especially suitable for this study. Women's experience in general have been overlooked or treated in terms of men's experience in the psychological research literature (Miller, 1986). The phenomenological approach goes to the phenomenon itself for information, thereby avoiding historical assumptions and neglect.

Furthermore, according to Gallos (1989) there is yet to be a comprehensive theory of women's career development. She claims that further research is required to describe what career means for successful women, to record the new career strides women are taking, and to examine the importance of a balanced life for women's self-esteem and feelings of well-being. Betz and Fitzgerald (1987) maintain that women's career development theory lacks a coherent framework and that the male-based models are inadequate for
women. It was appropriate, therefore, for a phenomenological approach to be used in this study to explore the experience of career for women who own businesses.

The phenomenological approach provided an intensive focus on the study participants' subjective experience as business owners, and the meaning they made of their experience of career (Giorgi, 1985). There is a need for descriptive data in this area due to the general lack of research in the areas of women's career choices and women in independent careers.

**Participants**

Since the goal of phenomenological research is not statistical generalizability it requires only as many participants as are necessary to illuminate the subject of interest (Polkinghorne, 1989). The researcher recruited ten women to participate in this study. This number is estimated as adequate to ensure that themes arising from the data do not occur by chance. Participants in a phenomenological study must have experience with the investigated phenomenon and be sufficiently articulate to illuminate it (Colaizzi, 1978).

In order to fill these requirements participants in this study were required to own a business for at least two years. Two or more years in business was estimated to be needed to assure that the venture was sufficiently established. In fact, the women who
volunteered for this study owned their businesses for an average of ten years, with five years being the shortest amount of time.

Procedure

Each of the ten women who participated in the study were recruited through “word of mouth” recommendations through the researcher network of colleagues and friends, or through hearing about the study as it was discussed during a Women Business Owners Association dinner. Any interested individuals who met the inclusion criterion made contact with the researcher by telephone. Preliminary telephone interviews insured the participants met with the study criteria. During the telephone discussions a time was arranged for the first data-gathering interview.

For the comfort and ease of the participants the interviews took place in the women’s offices or a private setting of their choice. To be considerate to the possible time constraints in the participants’ schedule, the participants chose the interview time and date.

All interviews were audio taped. Any questions or concerns were discussed in the first part of the data gathering interviews. The participants were asked to read and sign two copies of the ethical consent form at this time (Appendix A). An orienting statement provided the participant with a description of the study’s focus (Appendix B). The participants chosen for this study were, thereby,
fully informed of the nature of the research.

The first interviews began with general and non-threatening conversation to establish the rapport and trust that would potentially allow the participants to describe their experience comfortably. The researcher made an effort to show respectful concern for the participants during the interview. Establishing good interpersonal rapport is known to help develop an atmosphere conducive to informant disclosure (Osborne, 1990).

To remove as many demand characteristics from the research situation as possible, the researcher developed a relationship of empathic understanding and collaboration with the participants. The researcher gathered accounts of participants’ career experiences as well as the stories of how they came to own businesses.

To develop the atmosphere and relationship upon which phenomenological information may be gathered the researcher was guided by the principles of interviewing described by Polkinghorne (1989). The researcher-interviewer was responsible for keeping the interview focused on the topic under investigation. She listened in an active fashion, using skills such as probing, paraphrasing and clarifying in order to support the participant in describing her experience. She also allowed silence during the interview to facilitate the reflectiveness the participant needed to more deeply explore her
experience.

During the interviewing process the researcher "tracked" comments in the interview that required further exploration. She probed these topics after the participant completed expressing her thoughts. The researcher attempted to demonstrate her genuine empathy and regard to the participant throughout the interviewing process. The researcher took care not to be interrogative or leading. Keeping the interviews minimally structured allowed the structures and patterns in the data to emerge.

The first interview was used to gather the descriptive data. The interview was in the form of an open-ended dialogue structured by several open questions (Appendix C). The researcher sought to uncover the factual and the meaning level of the participant's experience through the interview (Giorgi, 1985). The interviewer asked the participants to describe their experience and tell their story.

The function of this interview was to elicit revealing and crucial information by encouraging each participant to speak associatively and introspectively about her experience. The participant was encouraged to describe as precisely as possible her career experience. She was asked to describe what she has encountered as a result of her career changes and how she feels
about her choices. These first interviews lasted from one hour to three hours in length, which proved to be enough time for each woman to share her experience of career as a business owner.

The participants were asked to report any additional relevant information to the researcher in the first part of the second interview session. The process of telling their stories in the first interview was expected to awaken memories and forgotten feelings that may be pertinent in fully understanding their career experience. All of the ten women agreed that the themes drawn from the first interviews represented their experience. Only one participant had something to add to the descriptions during the validation interviews.

The data-gathering interviews were transcribed as quickly as possible after the first sessions to help the inductive quality of the process and to allow for tentative interpretations. The second interviews were used to confirm or validate the themes found in the first interviews. A synopsis of the women's biographical information and the themes found in the interviews were presented to the participants to be validated. The procedure for the validating interviews is more fully described in the analysis section of this paper.

The researcher-interviewer recorded her thoughts and feelings
in a journal during the interviewing process. The journal writing provided a technique for developing awareness of the interviewer’s predispositions and biases. The journal was used during the analysis and writing up of the study in the bracketing process described after the Data Analysis section.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was conducted according to the method described by Colaizzi (1978). The seven steps of this method are as follows:

1. The researcher read the participants’ descriptions or protocols in order to get a general sense of the material.

2. She returned to each protocol separately and “extracted significant statements”. This means that the phrases or sentences that directly pertain to the investigated phenomenon were drawn out of the transcribed interviews and a complete listing of the extracted significant statements was created and any repetitions eliminated.

3. The researcher then endeavoured to find and spell out the meaning in each significant statement. It was important at this stage to allow the meanings to come out of the data. The researcher did not impose any conceptual theories or significance upon the data while “formulating the meanings”.

4. The researcher repeated the above process for each protocol and then organised the formulated meanings into “clusters of themes” (p. 59). The clusters were checked against the original protocols in order to validate them. This was done by looking for any additional information in the original protocols that was not accounted for in the clusters of themes, and checking the cluster of themes for anything that was not implied in the original protocols.

5. The results of all the previously described analysis were integrated into an “exhaustive description of the investigated topic” (p. 61).

6. The researcher then made an effort to compose a statement that identifies the essential pattern of the investigated topic, or as Colaizzi writes, “formulate the exhaustive description of the investigated phenomenon in as unequivocal a statement of identification of its fundamental structure as possible” (p. 61).

7. The second interview session was used to validate the themes. Each participant was asked if the researcher’s themes fully described their experience. They were asked if any aspect of their experience had been omitted. The researcher worked into the existing material any relevant new data that occurred from these interviews.

Specifically, two of the ten participants added information to
the collected data during the validation interviews. One participant felt the theme addressing support from others lacked sufficient emphasis on the reality and effect of the lack of support from others and how that influenced her business career. This aspect was woven into the material and validated with the remaining participants.

Another participant felt the theme addressing independence overemphasised independence as a innate quality of the women rather than a motivation for business ownership. This theme was reworked to include her comments and validated.

The interview information was transformed into the final shared structure. These structures are presented in the form of descriptive themes, using selections of the participants’ language and descriptions.

Bracketing

The orientation a researcher brings to a study shapes the study and its interpretation. Therefore, the researcher acted as a participant-observer and attempted to articulate her predispositions and biases through a process of thorough self-reflection called “bracketing” (Osborne, 1990). The researcher used the information gathered in the journal and through the journal writing process to uncover and analyse her own values and beliefs.

Bracketing will allow those who read the study to take the
researcher's perspective into account and to understand how and why the data was interpreted in this way. The researcher's presuppositions are as follows:

Women who own businesses are expected to have left their previous jobs because they were frustrated with the limits to their ability to achieve what they thought they were capable of. They are expected to be self confident and extroverted women, and have considerable emotional and financial support from their families. They are achievement oriented and enjoy making money. They will not call themselves feminists, but will assume that women can do anything men can do and should be paid appropriately. They will have experienced sex role stereotyping. They will think they are more like men than women, and may have ambivalent feelings about other women. They will have one or more strong role models, most likely male. It is presumed that women who own businesses will have encountered problems with their staff and have encountered difficulties with their business partners. They will have encountered difficulties acquiring loans from banks. It is also presumed that the female business owner will have ambivalent feelings about working with others as well as a desire to work with others. Finally, it is presumed that women
who owns businesses experience their careers as fundamental and vital aspects of their lives, as well as inspiring, creative and fulfilling. At the same time, it is presumed that being a business owner is often experienced as exhausting, lonely and overwhelming by women.

Ethics

Ethical considerations were addressed based on the standards outlined by the Ethical Standards of the American Association for Counselling and Development (cited in Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1992). To cover issues potentially relevant to this study the following measures were taken. The participants were assured during the initial telephone contact that they would be able to end the interviews at any time for any reason and that their participation was voluntary. Written consent forms (Appendix A) were completed at the beginning of the first interview. The participants were encouraged to ask questions at any time about the procedures.

All participants were asked to choose a pseudonym for themselves and their businesses to be used in the transcripts and in the final published text in order to protect their confidentiality. If the women choose anonymity all other identifying information, including the names and type of businesses was altered.

The researcher took responsibility for the participants' welfare
during the interviews. She avoided causing undue stress on the participant and provided support when necessary. Uncomfortable feelings and consequences brought about by the interviews were dealt with immediately.

**Limitations**

This study was limited to an exploration that could be achieved within the confines of a one to three hour interview and a validation interview. A more complete description of the participants' experiences as female business owners would require more interviews over a longer period of time. Limitations of time and resources have made this impossible.

This study as a phenomenological work was not intended to be generalizable beyond the explored population or setting (Giorgi, 1985; Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, the data, themes and conclusions derived from this study can not be expected to describe the experience of all women who own businesses. Generalizability will require continuing study with many more participants and settings (Colaizzi, 1978). However, the findings of this study can be compared to other studies and to theory. Furthermore, phenomenological research seeks to uncover the kind of entities or structures that make up a phenomenon, not its distribution (Polkinghorne, 1989). Such research is meant to be descriptive of
experience not inclusive.

This study is based on self-report and self-description. However, the accuracy of the information reported is not an important issue in phenomenological research. According to Van Manen (1990), making meaning from experience is a process that depends on the salience of the experience from the participant’s perspective. What she chooses to present, the order of the presentation and her feelings about what she presents form the meaning of the participant’s experience.

Reliability requires replication and control of settings and procedures according to experimental psychological methods. Phenomenological research treats every situation, person and phenomenon as unique. Therefore, reliability requires careful description of the participants, procedures and settings. Krefting (1990) claims that variability is to be expected in qualitative research so the key to assess the trustworthiness of the data is its trackability. This study described these elements carefully in order to maintain rigour according to phenomenological method.
CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter will include a synopsis of the women's personal demographics as well a narrative outlining their career paths. This narrative will include the story of what brought them to own a business and how they chose that business, as well as any challenges or diversions along the way. This chapter will then provide a listing of the common themes that arose from the interviews with the women.

The Participants

Ten women volunteered to participate in this study. Most women chose a pseudonym for themselves and their businesses, although some participants chose to use their real personal names and business names.

Pat H. - Studio 54 Photography. Pat is the owner of a photography studio which has been in business for sixteen years. She has no partners and no employees. Pat is 39 years old. She grew up in a middle class neighbourhood in Vancouver with a mother who worked as an artist, a father who worked as a manager for a telephone company and two older brothers. She has completed some college courses, has been married for three years, and has no children.

When Pat was in high school she dreamed of being a photographer. In the subsequent years Pat worked as a graphic artist, a clerk in a photography store, a typesetter, and a camera operator in television. One summer while on a solitary trip to the prairies Pat photographed the beautiful prairie light and
experienced what she called her Epiphany on the Prairie. She felt a tremendous sense of peace and joy and took this to mean that it was finally time for her to follow her dream and pursue photography professionally.

Based on this inspiration, Pat immediately quit her job and called a photographer acquaintance who looked at her portfolio and hired her on the spot. She left a secure job with good pay and benefits for one that could not pay her enough to live on. As Pat put it: "I always make my best moves when I trust my hunches and just jump."

However, even then Pat was not ready to fully assume the identity of a photographer. While working with her photographer mentor she called herself a graphic designer. "I knew if I failed as a graphic designer it wouldn't mean that much to me." They became a strong team and she learned that she was particularly gifted at selling. She marketed herself and her partner as a designer and photographer team. After four years of working this way she decided it was time to follow her dream to be a photographer again.

Pat told her partner she was no longer willing to work as a sales representative for him and she began to sell herself as a photographer who focused on people while he focused on products. Pat's partner offered her his contract doing promotional photographs for the provincial NDP. He claimed she would not make any money off this contract. This challenged Pat to be assertive about asking for money for her creative work.
With her partner's retirement she had the photographic studio to herself with all the costs and responsibilities. This forced Pat to finally risk promoting herself as a photographer. Although she claims she did not like to work from a place of desperation, she is aware of how anxiety forced her to make her business viable and successful within a short period of time. Pat claims: "I didn't have any ideas about being in business for myself until I found myself doing it!" She didn't understand when she began working with her partner that she was going into business for herself.

Pat has now been in business for herself for sixteen years and over that time her business has encountered many changes. She is at this time experiencing a need to modify things again because she has moved her business to a new community and has experienced a slow down. As Pat puts it: "The desperation anxiety is about to work again!"

In summary, Pat's story is one of knowing what she wanted to do early in her life, and yet, needing to try many different things before being able or willing to do it. She knew she wanted to be a photographer - which to her meant making her living through photography. However, it took her many tries and some years before she could risk testing this dream. Now she knows part of actualizing her vision of herself as a photographer required her to be in business for herself.

To Pat success means being a leader on some level. She also needs to be able to support herself doing what she loves to do. For
her, success is having energy, being connected to others, as well as being autonomous and self defining.

**Juliet - Leaf Clothing.** Juliet is the owner of a manufacturing company and five stores that sell women's clothing. She has one partner and seventy-five employees. She has a minority share of the company. Juliet has been in business for eight years. Previously Juliet worked as a social worker. Juliet is 37 years old. She grew up in a middle class household with a mother and father as well as two brothers and two sisters, all younger.

Juliet studied and worked as a social worker in South Africa. She moved to Cleveland where she completed her Master's degree and gave birth to the first of her four children. Juliet and her family moved to Vancouver where she was unable to work for four years until she became a landed immigrant. Although she had planned to go on for a Ph.D. and then go into private practice, Juliet found that social work in Canada lacked the political and community scope that she had enjoyed in the United States. She was further frustrated by the fact that there were no Ph.D. programs in social work in Vancouver at that time.

Juliet wanted a change and thought manufacturing might be an interesting area of work and had romantic notions about designing and being creative. She went into partnership with a man, agreeing to a twenty-five percent share of the business because she thought that would give her more time to be with her growing family.
They owned a factory and did contract work for other larger factories as well. When the recession hit, Juliet's company lost a large amount of their contract work because a lot of the larger factories had to close down. They had been making clothing for the bigger factories so they began manufacturing clothing for themselves. Their next step was to open their own stores. They have grown from employing four people to employing eighty people in just over seven years.

One of Juliet's greatest difficulty in business has been her relationship with her business partner. She considers her minority partner status to be the core of the problem. She believes that her partner values what he does in the business more than what she does and because he owns seventy-five percent of the business he has the final say on most matters, sometimes treating Juliet more like an employee than a partner. Juliet thinks that part of the problem lies in gender differences. She thinks that because he is a man he has different ways of dealing with situations and has a less democratic attitude than a woman would have. An related issue is the fact that the manufacturing industry is male dominated in terms of ownership, yet most of the employees are female. Juliet experiences herself as ambitious in terms of making her business a success, however, given the difficulties of her business arrangement, she also finds it stressful.

For Juliet to feel successful her business needs to be growing and she should be making a reasonable living from it. An important business related issue for Juliet is to remain moral and to treat people (customers and employees) properly. The most
important component of success for Juliet, however, is to achieve a balanced lifestyle; wealth when combined with stress and no time for anything else is not appealing to her.

Margaret - M. A. Angus Counselling Services Inc. At the time of this interview Margaret owned three businesses. For seventeen years she has operated a psychotherapist practice. She has owned a packaged office business for five years and for one year she has owned a business focusing on the development of training programs. Margaret has one partner in the training programs business and no partners in the other businesses. She has anywhere from one to five employees depending on her need at the time.

Margaret is 52 years old. She grew up in Vancouver in a upper middle class family. Her mother was a home maker and her father was a chartered accountant as well as a business owner, owning several supermarkets. Margaret has four younger siblings, two sisters and two brothers. Margaret has an R. N. and M. A. in psychology. She is single and has raised two children, aged nineteen and twenty-three, on her own.

In University Margaret had initially wanted to be an actress. During her second year she changed her mind and decided to go into nursing. She had wanted to be a nurse when she was a young girl. She worked as a nurse for some years in France, took time off to have two children and then went back to school and got her M. A. in psychology. Margaret then worked as a Counsellor in the corporate sector focusing on training. She was a single mother in France for three years.
Margaret moved back to Vancouver when her children were 5 and 9 after living in France for fifteen years. She started up her counselling business first and then with a friend she conceived the idea to start their own health promotion business. This friend subsequently backed out while they were looking for office space, forcing Margaret to go into the project by herself. Margaret could not see herself working in isolation so she decided to bring in as many other people as she could thereby developing a small centre, Broadway West.

Recently Margaret has joined in partnership with a woman from the human resources field; together they developed a business that provides training for individuals interested in starting up small businesses.

Opening Broadway West required Margaret to develop entrepreneurial skills which were quite different from the skills she had developed as a counsellor. She found that she tended to overestimate her own strength when she started new projects and would often forget about self care. While Margaret considers this effort necessary when starting a new business, she has found it stressful and it has also led to some illness for her.

Margaret has found managing three businesses at the same time difficult. She was concerned that her counselling practice suffered when she spent too much time on her other two businesses. Even with these difficulties Margaret would advise any woman to start her own business. Margaret considers success being able to do what she wants while making a contribution to humanity.
**Dawna - Stratcom Planning Inc.** Dawna has been in business for six years with no business partners and no employees. However, she has had up to forty-five subcontractors working for her. Her company supports organizations and communities through transitions using process facilitation, which is similar to conflict resolution for organizations, or management consultation.

Dawna is 42 years old. She grew up in Alberta with a mother who worked as a home maker and occasionally as a secretary. Her father worked as a self employed movie maker. She has two younger brothers, one three years younger and the other, now deceased, four years younger. Dawna has a Bachelor of Education. She is single with one child, an eight year old daughter.

Dawna's journey toward self employment began when she moved to Vancouver. She and her life partner moved from Ottawa because her partner was offered a job in Vancouver. Dawna had been working for the federal government as the director of communications for Forestry Canada, and later as a senior consultant to other federal departments supporting them as a communications consultant.

Upon arriving in Vancouver Dawna interviewed several firms looking for a potential employer. She was looking for a company that wished to contribute to people and community. She was unable to find a company that she felt had sufficient integrity or direction in this area so she began to consider starting her own company. In addition, she and her life partner separated.
Some of her old clients in Ottawa hired her again, giving her the added support she needed to go out on her own. She began developing a base of clientele in Vancouver. Dawna went from being jobless to being totally self supporting within a six month period of time. The stress and financial pressures were intense for Dawna at this time causing her some illness. Dawna thinks her strong will to survive combined with self confidence in what she is capable of, were the source of her ability to make it through these and other hard times.

Dawna considers her business as evolutionary. Her business changes as she changes; they evolve together. For example, she and her business have changed to accommodate her child. Furthermore, Dawna's personal values concerning community and environmental issues inform the direction of her business.

Overall, Dawna has a great feeling of achievement for what she has accomplished. For Dawna success means being the best she can be and giving herself the freedom to go for it on all fronts of life. It also means having time to ride horses with her daughter.

Pat D. - Descheneaux Recruiting Services Ltd. Pat has been in business for herself for eleven years. She has no partners and from 1 - 6 employees. She owns an employment agency that specializes in finding employees for the insurance industry.

Pat is 52 years old. Her father was a manager for a heavy equipment company and her mother worked as a realtor. Pat had four brothers and sister. She was the oldest. She grew up in Alberta where she completed grade 10 in high school. She raised four children for 15 years on her own. They are now between the
ages of 30 and 35. She was single at the time of the first interview and married her third husband in June of 1995.

Before Pat started her own business she worked for a large employment agency finding people for jobs in the insurance business. The manager's lack of integrity and inability to keep agreements made things difficult for Pat. For example, it was only when she needed surgery that she found out she was not on the company's insurance plan as promised. This manager eventually embezzled funds from the company and fled to Australia.

Pat found this work place experience very disturbing. She quit thinking that she should go into a completely different line of work. However, her clients began phoning her at home and, after checking out a few other job options, she decided to try going out on her own as an employment agent. She rented an office from a friend who agreed to defer the rent for a month or two. Her phones were hooked up on February 20th and she made her first placement on March 1st, 1984, then things took off.

Pat's business has had times of rapid growth and times of struggle. She has been able to pull her company out of really difficult times. For example, at one point she was really hit hard when a combination of the recession and an ex life partner left her with a serious debt problem. Pat has succeeded in weathering these and other difficult times and has gained a strong sense of accomplishment for getting through them.

For Pat, success means making enough money to live a comfortable life style, as well as not allowing herself to become stressed out by business. Pat considers balance to be a necessary
aspect of success. For her a balanced life style requires time to include golf and other physical leisure activities.

Marie - MG Originals. Marie is 63 years old. She was raised in communist Hungary by a single mother in a middle class household. She left Hungary in 1956, when she was 24 years old, as a refugee. Marie has some university. She has been married three times and has five children, aged 27 - 44 years of age. She was a single parent for fourteen years.

Marie's father died when she was four years old and she has no siblings. During the 1930's and 1940's Marie's mother owned a clothing manufacturing business in Hungary, which employed between two and thirty-nine people. As a child Marie worked with her mother, taking care of the books, designing clothes and generally behaving as her mother's partner.

In 1949 the Communists took over Marie's mother's business and took away her license. Marie and her mother were now registered as "Class Strangers" or "Outcasts" by the Communist Government, due to their previous business ownership, and were only allowed to work at "low labor" or heavy labor, like rock breaking and carrying construction materials.

During this same period Marie married a man who quickly proved to be abusive physically and emotionally. Furthermore, he controlled her earnings, he received her pay cheque and she had to beg for money for everything from groceries to stockings. The difficulties and cruelties Marie endured in her early adult years instilled in her a desire for independence that would propel her for the rest of her life. She started to think strategically and began
to plan her escape to freedom from both her marriage and her country. Marie claims, "It was about getting out of slavery."

Living in a country where she was unable to work her trade or own her own income, with a cruel and controlling life partner Marie began to see that freedom meant financial independence, based of her background this meant being in business for herself.

When she was eighteen Marie went back into business with her mother as part of a craft coop, and began her education as a designer and cutter through the Hungarian Textiles Association. Her mother regained her license around this time and Marie would eventually qualify for this license if she had the skill.

In 1956, at twenty-four years of age, Marie and her life partner escaped to Vienna with their two children. They then emigrated to Canada and in 1957, Marie and a woman partner opened a restaurant seating 140 people, in Calgary, Alberta. Her husband quit his job to join her in the restaurant after putting all his debts in her name. He drank and gambled away the restaurant profit so Marie sold her share in 1958.

She started dressmaking out of her home in 1958 and by 1960 opened a store front where she made made-to-measure clothes with three employees. She made this move to get out of the house where her husband was drinking and abusing her and her children. By 1962 Marie was making $1000 per month. At last financially independent, she left her husband and moved her four children and her mother, who recently joined them from Hungary, to a new home.
Marie has been in business for herself for most of the next thirty-three years. Health problems caused her to make any of her career changes. For example, in 1969, Marie had an operation to remove stomach ulcers. She decided to close her shops and go into manufacturing because she thought it would be less stressful working with fewer people directly. Recently, she has been diagnosed with Parkinson's and is limiting her business to crafts that can be done in her home.

To Marie, owning a business represents freedom; freedom from governmental controls and changes, and freedom from dependency on men. She received no assistance, and created her businesses with her own financial risk and responsibility. She was often exhausted, worried and without a private life, and these pressures took a great toll on her health.

For Marie success means being in control of her own life and income. It means being recognized and appreciated for what she has accomplished in her life and who she is. Success includes the contacts she has made with others over the years - the friendships. When Marie looks at a garment she made thirty years ago and sees that her workmanship is still beautiful and wearable, she feels successful and proud.

**Marzena - MPI (Marzena's Private Investigation).**

Marzena owns a security company that provides store investigators to large retail chains stores. She has been in business for twelve years. Her husband is her only partner and she has sixty employees. Before going into business for herself Marzena worked as a store investigator for nine years.
Marzena is a 36 years old. She was an only child raised by a single mother. She grew up in an upper middle class household in communist Poland and came to Canada at 18 years of age. Marzena has a B. A. in Criminology. She has been married for ten years and has one seven year old daughter.

Marzena started her business when she was twenty-four years old. She had been working as a store investigator while she was taking her BA at University. Her mother had been pressuring her to become a lawyer or notary and marry a certain wealthy man.

Marzena's movement toward business ownership began when she was on her way to her examination to be a notary and she felt she could not continue. She pulled over on to the side of the road and knew that she would never be a notary. She described her experience as just knowing that she would not do this, so she just turned around and went home.

Marzena was offered a job setting up a security office for a drug store company that had six outlets. She is not clear why, but she told them she would only do it if they hired her as a company. They agreed and she began hiring people and training them. The drug store company was so small the investigators would soon be recognized and Marzena would have to move them or hire new ones. She realized that it would work better if she had another contract so she could move her investigators through another company. Marzena approached a large grocery chain who let her prove herself with one store. Soon she had stores to take care of all over British Columbia.
Getting her first pay cheque forced Marzena to become a business. When trying to cash her first cheque at the bank the teller asked her her business name. Marzena had no idea so she came up with Marzena's Private Investigation on the spot in order to cash her first cheque. Shortened to MPI her business' name is now known nation wide.

Marzena's story is one of an ever unfolding movement toward freedom. She was raised in Communist Poland by an authoritative mother. Rather than limiting Marzena's ability to manifest her inner desires, these early bounds seemed to have helped her gain a strong sense of self knowledge as well as a real willingness to take risks rather than go with what others think is best for her. Marzena's story reveals a strong movement toward self determination and self worth through owning her own business.

Marzena requires a sense of full control of her life to feel successful. Success for her includes being respected and working with people she enjoys. To Marzena success also means never doing any house work and being financially independent.

Sydney - Apparel Inc. Sydney owns a specialty clothing store and has been in business for six years. Her husband is a silent partner in the business and she has two full time and two part-time employees.

Sydney is 32 years old and grew up in Vancouver. Sydney's mother died when she was fifteen. Her father works as a lawyer in private practice. Sydney's elder sister of two years older died in 1984. Sydney has a Bachelor's Degree in Commerce. She has been
married for nine years, has one three year old child, and was pregnant at the time of the first interview.

Sydney used to work in employee relations at several hospitals but did not like the atmosphere created by union and management dynamics. She came to own her own business with the support of her life partner. They had always planned to open their own business but took some time before finding the right idea.

What galvanized Sydney was spending two or three weekends in malls shopping for work clothes with her husband who was shocked that there was no one store that she could go to that specialized in clothes for business women. They decided that this was a perfect market niche and opened Apparel Inc. in Vancouver's downtown business core after purchasing an existing retail shop in Richmond. This original venture was not a success.

Sydney has set up her business in such a way that she can now take time off to have her children and still enjoy some aspects of business ownership. She considers a balance between homelife and work life to be an important part of her definition of success. She has a real sense of achievement when she has the store running on its own with some intermittent attention from her. Sydney sees her life in terms of stages and while her children are young she sees it as fine to be focused more on her home. She expects that by the time her children are at school she will be more interested in building or changing her business.

**Penny - Design Consulting.** Penny owns a human resources management company. She has been in business for
nine years and has no partners. She subcontracts out work but has no employees. Penny is 42 years old. She grew up in the Fraser Valley with her mother who worked as a homemaker and pharmacist's assistant, and her father who worked as a businessman owning several companies. She has a half brother, who is thirteen years older, and a brother three years younger than she. Penny was raised in an upper middle class household. Penny has a B. A. She has been married for three and a half years, and has no children.

Penny came from a family where entrepreneurial skills were the norm. When she was young her family ran a business from her home so she saw the business taking place all around her. She considers this early modeling to be an important influence for her. It planted a seed that owning a business was possible.

After University Penny worked in the public sector at both the Federal and Provincial levels in the area of human resources. She found that a wonderful grounding for looking at large issues from a policy perspective. But she saw inadequacies in terms of how policies were implemented. She became increasingly frustrated and realized her "rabble rouser" attitude, though tolerated in her twenties, would get her in trouble in her thirties. It became increasingly clear that if she wanted to take her work in human resources in new directions she would have to do it from outside the bigger organizations.

She decided to move out on her own and take a chance as a contractor working outside of the large corporations, focusing on the human resources issues. She goes into organizations and
provides support, advice, training, or information, or conducts studies. Her career as a business owner is one of the passions of her life.

Penny has used her intuition to transform her life. She followed its lead when she moved to the West coast where she knew no one and worked in an "non supportive environment". Nine months after moving she was diagnosed with cancer. These challenges forced Penny to face many fears and focus on what she wanted in life.

For Penny success means having a balanced life style where all pieces of her life comfortably fit together. These pieces included her primary relationship, her circle of friends, lots of time spent outdoors, and something she calls "non-moving solitude" (reading, meditating, and listening to music).

Renate - General Insurance Brokerage. Renate owns a general insurance brokerage agency. She has owned the business for eleven years. She has no partners and six employees. Renate is 48 years old and has one sister who is two years older. She was born in Germany and raised in a middle class household in Burnaby. Renate has a graduate degree and is a chartered accountant by profession. She has lived with her life partner for six years.

Renate's mother and father owned the agency before her. While she was negotiating the sale of her parent's insurance agency for them, her father surprised her by offering to sell it to her. After twenty four hours to think it over, she agreed.
Renate worked extremely hard in the first few years to pay off her financial commitments to her parents and the bank. She now enjoys a strong sense of accomplishment from this achievement. As her business has grown, her role in the business has changed allowing her more time to be creative as well as enjoy leisure activities.

Renate considers independence to be the most important element to success. Independence means doing things she wants to do, and requires financial independence, which means having enough money that she never needs to worry again. Another important aspect of success for Renate is having a life partner relationship which is mutually supportive and allows her personal freedom.

Common Themes

The process of data analysis yielded nine common themes which were extracted from the in-depth interviews of the ten participants. Each theme reflects the experience of all the women. The quotations used to further express the themes were chosen because they most accurately represent the essence of the women's shared experience. The themes are not presented in any particular order of significance. I use the word "sense" in describing the themes because in order to construct meaning from their experience the women had to make sense of and reflect on their experience. The following themes represent the experience of career for women who own businesses:

1. Sense of career as a representation of self.
2. Sense of struggle to achieve a balanced life.
3. The desire for or need for recognition or validation from themselves and others.
4. Sense of being unique.
5. Strong sense of independence and autonomy.
6. The need for an interactive relationship with their environment.
7. Strong sense of accountability for the progress, success and failure of their businesses.
8. Strong sense of appreciation for the support of others.
9. Strong sense of connection with and contribution to others through their work.

A sense of career as a representation of the self (identity). A theme that emerged in this research on the experience of career for women who owned their own businesses was the sense of career as a representation of self. Many of the women talked about their careers as if they and their careers were inseparable. They talked about how their businesses evolved around their own personal changes or how they personally had evolved according to the needs of their businesses. Their sense of self development was intertwined with their sense of career development. They were often unable to separate their careers from their identities.

The women connected who they are to what they do. They saw their careers and their businesses as the places where they are most themselves. They used phrases like "it was my calling card," "I merged into my career," and "it is the place I prove myself, I am myself," to describe their relationship to their career.
An important aspect of the sense of career being a representation of the self was described by the women as a feeling of intense emotional attachment to their career. One woman expressed her relationship with her career in this way: "To me it is one of the passions of my life. ... It touches on all areas of my life and enhances." Another claimed: "I just fell in love with what I did." While one woman stated: "It is another marriage," another called it her "love affair," and another "my baby." One of the women explained the intensity of her relationship with her career by saying "It was my life. I couldn't sleep without it." The women in this study described consistently a passionate connection with their careers.

Another aspect of the experience of career as a representation of self was found in the way the women described the evolution of their personal and professional lives. One woman put it this way:

Initially my career was my identity. In the sense that I connected who you are with what you did. ... It was a place to prove myself. Now because I have a little person, that changes your focus all the time. And what happened out of that is my career became a place where I simply merge my personal life with my professional life. ... So as I evolve and change so can my career. ... You can only do that if you own your own business.

This sense of self development and career development as being interconnected and mutually evolving was a common experience for the women. Furthermore, the women claimed owning their
own businesses was an important advantage in being able to allow their businesses to evolve with their personal lives.

For many of the women in this study their sense of career as a representation of the self was experienced in the way they presented themselves to the world. One woman put it this way: "It was a legitimate way in which I could represent, I could present myself to the world." Another woman stated: "Well it has changed in the sense that career used to be a place where I proved myself. Now it is a place where I am myself." A woman who had to take a health break from her business described her experience in this way: "I'm feeling a bit hidden and lost now when I'm not being published in that way. ... I like to be out there, I mean, I like to be seen, at least my work." These women experienced their careers as the medium with which they introduce and manifest themselves in the world.

To summarize, the sense of career as a representation of the women's sense of self included a feeling of intense emotional attachment or passion for their careers. It also included a sense of the women's personal and professional lives as being intertwined and mutually evolving. The women described the experience of how their careers were a representation of their identities when they discussed how they presented themselves to the world. Their careers became who they were when they introduced themselves publicly. Furthermore, the participants of this study used their particular business as a medium or arena where they could most easily express and exhibit aspects of themselves they wanted to see in the world. This sense of career as being inherently and
intimately connected to the self, or a personification of the self, was expressed by all the women in this study.

A sense of struggle to achieve a balanced life. A theme that emerged in this study on the experience of career for women who own their own businesses was the sense of struggle the women felt as they tried to achieve balance in their lives. Balance was described as a component of success and health. Some of the women knew they had achieved balance when they had time for themselves to do things other than work. Other women saw balance as achieved when they were spending more time in the home with their children and/or life partners. In most cases balance was only accomplished when the business had been running for some time and had attained a certain amount of financial success. It was only then that the women felt they could risk putting their attentions to anything not business oriented. Some women established a more balanced life only after a traumatic event, such as an accident, illness or loss of a loved one, forced them to spend less time focused on their businesses.

The struggle toward balance was often a painful one for the women. Competing demands vied for the women's attention often exhausting them and giving them the sense that they were not doing anything fully or successfully. One woman became so exhausted in her struggle to take care of her ill parent and her business she became ill. As she put it:

Then mom got sick and it was a huge turning point ... I started getting depressed and stuff and I started not handling things as well and after awhile I got taken off
work. .. And the business went on life support basically. I notice that when I'm emotionally available, there's work. When I'm not available it goes away. ... I didn't know if I wanted to do it at all ... I didn't have any kind of sense of purpose.

Her mother's illness and her business competed for her attention to the point where this participant became depressed and unable to work. However, in retrospect she saw this experience as having forced her out of a stagnant place in her business. As she put it: "It was becoming more of the same ... I think I was saved by Mom's illness because it just sent me right back to square one."

Another aspect of the women's struggle for balance was a sense of feeling overwhelmed by the competing demands. This was a common experience for these women. As one woman described it:

It is very hard to be running a business and being every part of that business when anything else comes up in my life to distract me. It is really easy to get overwhelmed. Relationships, illness, working the way I do by myself I get, when I get working hard, when I'm doing really well, I get so focused and so overwhelmed that I don't have that much of a life outside of it. ... It is hard to balance my personal needs with my business needs. I don't think I've ever succeeded in being balanced about it yet.

Feeling tired and pressured while taking care of their busy home lives as well as their business lives was a particularly
pressing issue for the women in the study who were mothers of young children. As one woman stated:

There is less time for friends and less time for myself in terms of relaxation. ... When I have time I feel I ought to be home with the kids. I'm a much more stressed anxious person than I was seven years ago. I'm always tired. I don't really have very much energy. ... that is also compounded by the fact that M (life partner) works so hard and he's away so often.

A participant who was also a mother with a two year old and another child to be born in several months felt concerned about her decreased involvement in her business. She described her conflict this way:

Sometimes I wonder how career oriented I am or, how dedicated, because I'm trying to reduce my involvement. ... I think it ties in with the stage in your life. ... once M. (child) is in school and once this baby gets into school ... my mind can open up, maybe to working here more.

The mothers in this study strove for balance in their lives by shifting their focus from family to business and back. Their struggle was compounded by a sense of self doubt and concern of not doing either home or business well to the extent they would like.

One participant who raised her now grown children on her own at the same time she was in business for herself discussed the pressures of trying to do it all and the extra pressure of
societal demands and expectations on women. She described her experience in this way:

My kids were two and six when I split. When you are trying to get a business going, giving all that energy and nurturing and work and sheer time and money and everything to get that going. And you are doing the same thing at home. It really is a lot. .. I was brought up in the fifties, very much wife and mother was suppose to be our career. You weren't even supposed to work. If we did, it was supposed to be just a little jobby dealy, until we had kids or for a rough patch in our husbands' lives. ... Our focus was supposed to be - wife and mother. So it was hard when you had another focus, which I preferred in many ways. Like being wife and mother was okay but I really loved business too. ... It was always frustrating not being able to focus on doing things and I think men have a lot less problem with that.

This woman's struggle, as well as the struggles reported by some of the other women in the study, included multiple pressures from societies dictates as well as a profound sense of frustration with Canadian institutions, such as banks and schools, that she found to be particularly lacking in any support for women in her position.

Ironically, while the competing demands of children often left the women feeling frustrated in their business efforts, one of the participants who was a single mother of a young child found that having a child actually improved her relationship with her work. She explained her experience in this way:
Emotions and your emotions around having children are one thing you can't control. So it is the place where you learn that your intellect, if you use it to control your environment, your situation, you chuck it out the window because babies don't have much use for that. And they do their thing pretty well. And that's a tremendous learning experience. ...

Tremendous because of the perspective they bring. They see the world in ways that are so fresh and so revitalizing because they don't have those assumptions that we carry around with us. They don't have any of those old patterns of experience that say it must be like this. It was a wake up call on the emotional side of things and after that it's evolved. I never paid a whole lot of attention to that before.

This woman found that the experience of having a child and having to meet the needs of her child opened up the emotional side of life to her. She used words like, "instinctive," "heart," "soul," and "intuition" to describe what was different in her work. Interestingly, she claimed that these aspects were always within her work but she had formerly attributed them to her intellect and now she saw them as gifts from her emotional life. This woman's movement toward balance within her professional life was encouraged rather than challenged by the competing demand of child raising.

Other women in the study who were successful at achieving some level of balance in their lives saw balance as a crucial aspect of business ownership. One woman said: "It is absolutely about balance. When my life is out of balance nothing
works either at home or at the store." Another woman put it this way:

Having career enhances the other parts of my life and the other parts of my life very definitely enhance my career. I am a strong believer in full integration and full interdependence between the roles, tremendously important. Otherwise the loads are out of balance, the focus is out of balance and you are not effective anymore.

Balance was seen as a necessary component in these women's lives. They each perceived that success was dependent on having a balance between the many aspects of their lives. This freedom to shift focus and allow themselves time for other pursuits was often considered something earned; a reward they gave themselves after a certain level of financial success was achieved in their businesses. "I've pushed myself for long hours, getting the job done and so on. And now, I've earned the rewards called leisure. ... I feel I don't need any more money certainly."

To summarize, a theme that emerged in this study was a sense of struggle these women business owners felt as they tried to achieve balance in their lives. Balance was important to these women because they attributed it to personal health and the success of their business. The struggle for balance was often difficult and painful for these women. The women who juggled the competing demands of raising children or caring for loved ones in ill health, with the demands of their businesses, presented particularly poignant examples of this. A side-effect of this struggle was often exhaustion, a sense of feeling overwhelmed, a
sense of never doing anything well enough and, finally, illness or depression. Some of women's struggle with this movement toward balance brought them a deeper sense of themselves or a renewed sense of purpose. All of these women saw a more balanced lifestyle as a necessary aspect of a healthy life and a reward for having worked hard and having created a successful business.

The desire for or need for recognition or validation from themselves and others. A theme that emerged in this research on the experience of career for women who owned their own businesses was a strong desire or need for the recognition or validation of their successes and competencies. This theme was expressed as the women described the various aspects of their overall experience as well as when they were commenting on that which was most rewarding and satisfying in owning their own businesses. They said things like: "[Owning a business] means getting a lot of acknowledgment which is very important to me."; "[Being published] it was also good for business because people would see my name on it."; "One of the most important things is to have people be interested in what I'm doing ... having people out there talking about me."; "Prestige ... They see my picture in the * magazine every two months and they think they know me. ... I liked that recognition right away. Duck to water."

The women saw recognition and validation for their success and competence as an important part of business ownership in two main ways. Recognizing and validating their own skills and capabilities was seen as essential to achieving business direction and success. In addition, recognition and validation from others
provided the women with added job satisfaction as well as a sense of higher status and reputation.

Knowing their value was important for each women because it lead them to know what business they should be in, as well as providing them with the confidence to make a change. For example, self recognition and validation was discussed by one participant who commented on the importance of a business owner honoring her own strengths. She put it this way:

But if you go on your own you have to be sure of what you are doing to make money. Because nobody is going to pay for something insignificant. You have to believe in yourself and be absolutely sure what you do is good. And if you are positive in that one, your business is going to flourish. Then you are always going to have a job when other people don't have a job.

The importance of knowing her own strengths and valuing them was a matter of business survival for this woman. All participants saw this self knowledge, or recognition of personal strengths, as the foundation of business acumen and success.

Another woman reported the significance of valuing herself for her competence in this way:

I won't do anything for free because my time is important to me and that is also what I learned in the business is self-value. I also learned certain things about business is you don't ask. You just tell your client, if you are good. You have to know you are good, and you have to charge properly.
Self recognition and validation were considered as meaningful not only because they made the women feel good about themselves, but also because the women saw self recognition and validation as necessary and consequential for business survival and success.

Recognition and validation from others provided the women who participated in this study with added job satisfaction. Some women reported gaining a sense of status and prestige from their higher profile as a business owner. For example, the sense of wanting recognition from others for her work was evinced by one woman this way:

It's satisfaction. In my field of work you put that garment on the customer. When you see it and what you see in her face - her satisfaction is your second wages. ... When you work for a boss they take that satisfaction. [It is most rewarding] to see the satisfaction of people and being loved by your customers. ... So there was a lapse of at least ten years, I was out of circulation [from Calgary]. And when I put out my name as MG Originals - maybe you can put MG Originals in your paper too? - When I put out MG Originals the phone started to ring. Are you the MG Originals who used to be on the 7th Avenue? ... And it was really something else to see people who came to me thirty years before.

As with the other participants, the recognition and validation this woman received from others had become significant to her business satisfaction and her business success or reputation. These experiences brought her added meaning to her work, as well as
"her second pay cheque" - a sense of joy and self satisfaction from seeing her work appreciated and affirmed by her clients. All other participants enjoyed the recognition and validation of others for their work.

The women's desire and need for recognition from others was often expressed in their discussions around job satisfaction. Getting a sense of their own competence from others was validation of their success in their chosen business field.

One of the participants discussed her enjoyment of the buying role in her business, and her pleasure with the recognition of her business success by others. She described it this way:

I enjoy the buying side especially when we go to New York to these showrooms and, you know, representing myself as the owner of a business and knowing I'm buying from sources that Bloomingdales and all these big stores buy from and knowing we put me there. We created that role. So I do enjoy the higher relations you could call it. ... I have wonderful relations with my suppliers. ... It made me realize we are an important account and I have some bargaining power. Why not, that feels good. It is a topsy turvy thing, I do enjoy at times the high profile of being the business owner.

This woman, like all the participants in this study, acknowledged her need for recognition and validation from others for her success in business, as well as her enjoyment for the level of prestige being a business owner had provided her. Economic
power and reputation were linked to validation from others for the women in this study.

In summary, the women who participated in this research felt a need or desire for recognition and validation for their success and competence. They believed it was important to receive this recognition and validation from others as well as from themselves. Being able to recognize their own capabilities and to value them was considered essential to achieving business direction and success. Receiving acknowledgment and validation from others added to the women's overall job satisfaction and validated their business success.

A sense of being unique. The women who participated in this research described the sense of being and/or providing something that is unique in their work. They used phrases like "they count on me to do what not everybody can do", "I am not ordinary", "I like the high profile", "I specialize", and "It's around how you are doing it differently from others" to convey the sense that aspects of their selves and/or professional lives were rare and special. The women had a sense that their chosen career and their interest in owning a business came about because of their singularity.

An important aspect of the experience of being unique was described by the women as a sense that they were intrinsically distinct from others. Others talked about uniqueness in terms of how they engage in their particular profession differently than their competitors. Some of the participants discussed the specialty of their business in terms of the narrow client base it draws from,
and others discussed uniqueness as the important component of the product or service they developed. In all cases the experience of uniqueness was used to explain the popularity of the women's services to the public, as well as the fit of the particular profession to the participant.

The sense of uniqueness was articulated by some of the women to explain how they came to own their own business. For example, one woman chose to go into business for herself in a male dominated profession at the age of twenty-four, rather than marry. She explained it in this way: "I was not ordinary, I was different. I am very strong minded. I was considered the black sheep of the family. I never did what was expected of me." While this woman saw uniqueness as an aspect of her personality that came out of her childhood experiences, other women saw it in the way what they did was different from their competitors. One woman explained it in this way: "It is something they count on me to do that not everybody can do, and success to me is being special and unique."

Some of the women made their business out this ability to provide something unique. One woman put it this way: "because I was a designer, ... I was able to provide something different, something special and not from the catalogue. ... none of my customers ever wanted the same dress."

In describing the aspects of her career that provide her with meaning one woman claimed that her uniqueness came out of her ability to see unexplored niches. She described it in this way: "It is the excitement of seeing new areas that need to be addressed that
nobody else is talking about, nobody else is looking at, or finding new ways of looking at them that are more effective."

Having undergone an intensely adversarial court situation as well as a bout of cancer one study participant's sense of her own unique nature became clear to her. She described the affect of these challenges on her life in this way:

But what it did, it just kept stripping away those fears that say maybe not today, maybe I shouldn't, maybe I'm not good enough. Until the steel came through. It gets white hot. The steel comes through and then that's what you take forward. I mean there is constant fixing, always constant improvement, always constant pushing of the envelope for me. That's the way I am. I know the essential core product is okay. ... There is no faking ... just the forcefulness of your sincerity.

For the women in this study, their sense of being unique helped them to explain their interest and success in the business world. It helped them reach an understanding as to why they were able to do what many women and men can not. It provided the women with a clear explanation as to why they were able to take risks and handle challenges. Their sense of being unique and their willingness to acknowledge their uniqueness to others was a relatively safe way to share their sense of pride or self-satisfaction in what they do and who they are.

To summarize, the sense of being unique for the participants in this research included a feeling of being intrinsically, personally different than others. It also included a sense of being able to
provide services in a way that was unusual and special. The sense of providing something unique to customers explained the very source of some of the women's businesses, while others saw their uniqueness in terms of their ability to see what others can not. This sense of being unique was closely linked to their sense of pride and fulfillment in what they had accomplished within their careers.

**A strong sense of independence and autonomy.** All the women who participated in this research described a strong sense of independence and autonomy as being an important aspect of their professional lives. They used words like: "freedom," "self defining," "I'm in charge," "self-sufficient," "choice," "personal accountability," "variety," "change," and "creative challenge," to describe their experience of career. When discussing their independence the women talked about their discomfort working for other people and mentioned their dislike for imposed job parameters, job descriptions, and hierarchical structures. All of the women commented on the importance of not being subject to the authority of another person or institution. They also described their satisfaction of not being dependent on or part of some larger group.

An important aspect or interrelated feeling of the sense of independence the women experienced was autonomy. The women experienced autonomy as the ability to be self determining and self governing. They discussed their passion for continued learning and personal development, as well as their sense of themselves as creating change in the world, and they felt that
their ability to be self determining as business owners allowed them to learn, develop and evolve as they saw fit. Owning a business permitted them to move and change. For example, they were able to find particular business niches and capitalize on opportunities because of their power to be self governing. They saw their business ownership as allowing them to realize their need for independence and autonomy.

An important aspect of the sense of independence and autonomy for the women who participated in this research was expressed in their discussion about their previous employment histories. They compared their experience of owning a business to working for someone else and declared that the major difference was the experience of independence and autonomy. One woman described it this way:

If you are in a job where you are working for somebody else they will define the box you are in. Not too many jobs give you open boxes. So this is way more fun because this way as I change and learn and grow so can my career. I can take it in whatever direction. I have the freedom. Freedom is probably the most critical aspect of this. You have the freedom to take it which ever way you want.

This woman and the other women who participated in this study had been uncomfortable with the parameters set by others in their previous work experiences. They all described having their own businesses as a type of freedom.
Another woman described her need for independence and autonomy found through business ownership as compared to the limits of working for someone else in this way:

Every now and then I get sick of it, like I'm in one of those moods at the moment. ... Then I look in the want ads. And I just can't do it. A nine to five job. Working for somebody else, having somebody else telling me how I'm suppose to do things. Oh Oh. Job descriptions. ... They start describing what I have to do and things like contact the public and ta tee ta. ... Even the jargon is kind of confining. ... like imagining actually that I've gotten the job and I'm on site. I start seeing this picture flash before my eyes of meetings. ... Talking ad nauseam about George Smith that you couldn't give a damn about. ... You don't want to listen to these people. It is a whole lot of time and effort on stuff I don't want to do. ... I don't want to spend my days doing that. ... It is doing a whole lot of things I don't want to do in order to be able to do the little bits of what I want to do.

When reflecting on the aspects of owning her business she liked least she continued:

Which is funny because what sends me to the want ads is the notion that all of a sudden I'm having to do lots of things I don't want to in my business. Like bookkeeping, making fliers or writing up brochures, something's which I hate. ... But I am determining what I am going to do.
This woman articulated the shared experience of the participants as a whole when she described her feelings about working for others as compared to working for herself.

The women were gratified to know that they were not subject to the authority of others or dependent on external structures. One woman described her experience in this way:

The most rewarding aspect of owning my business is my autonomy, mainly. I still like being captain of my own little ship, When I'm busy it is not so much that I can start when I want and end when I want. It is most like having a hundred employers instead of one, except that having a hundred employers I don't need any one of them. I still feel like I'm in charge. Like I can generate work. I know how to sell and I'm willing to sell myself.

For the women in this study independence meant freedom from 'boxes' or job parameters set by others, freedom from spending their time doing things they considered unimportant or things they simply did not want to do, freedom from organizational and bureaucratic politics, and freedom from dependency. Implicit within all of these was a sense of strong desire to be free of the frustration and boredom that accompanied these experiences for these women.

As witnessed in the above quotes corresponding and interrelated to the women's sense of independence was their strong sense of autonomy. The women expressed their sense of autonomy as a desire to make their own decisions, take risks, work when and how they chose, and change and evolve their
business however they saw fit. One woman described it in this way:

I have control of my own life. I think that is the biggest thing. I have total control. I have no one to blame it on but myself when things go wrong. I am responsible for me totally.

The participants of this study enjoyed their sense of autonomy. One woman stated her experience of autonomy in this way:

That is a great feeling. To know that I can sort of do what I want. I'm not accountable really to anyone. If I don't want to go to work tomorrow I don't go to work tomorrow. ... I like the autonomy but there's a huge responsibility that comes with it. I suppose I like the autonomy and I'm not so crazy about all the responsibility.

This woman and the others experienced their sense of autonomy as the freedom to work for whom they wanted and how they wanted. They enjoyed their sense of being self determining and self governing.

Another aspect of the strong sense of independence and autonomy for the women in this study was expressed through their desire for continued learning and change. They claimed that by owning their own businesses they were exceptionally able to continue learning, changing and evolving in ways they would not be able to were they working for another. According to the women in this study owning provided them with the independence and autonomy that allowed them to learn, change and grow. As one woman put it:
I like being the boss. I like being independent. I like making decisions. I like the aspect of marketing and business development. I think I am particularly good at that. ... It may sound boastful but I am good at that. ... I can honestly say I am happier being an employer than an employee. ... Having business and people and a growth environment. ... I like to put my ideas into practice. I like to see the evolution of my ideas and plans and that they come to fruition and the only way you can do that is to be in control of your own business.

This woman, like the others in the study, enjoyed being the boss and making decisions because it allowed her to see the evolution of her ideas and plans in an environment she created.

Having the freedom to learn, change and grow personally and professionally allowed the women to take advantage of events in the world around them. One participant continually studied current events in a quest for her next business opportunities. She described her experience in this way:

For me personally one of the most rewarding things is recognizing an issue or niche or a problem that no one is yet talking about and taking it out there. And starting to get it out there in the limelight and seeing people move forward with it. ... I love doing the research, I love the sort of environmental scanning and saying what are the new issues in the work place. The independence. I take that to be part of my right. I have a right to that absolutely.
The power to explore new areas of interest and capitalize on opportunities was a privilege that came as a direct result of the independence and autonomy created by owning a business according to these women.

For some of the women a different kind and quality of autonomy occurred after their business reached a certain level of financial success. As one woman put it:

Because of the growth I have been able to have more freedom to be creative and do different things in business. ... I have the freedom to focus where my interests are and where I'm good.

This woman, like the others who had the experience of some level of financial success, found that added freedom came from not having to worry about money any more.

In summary, the women who took part in this research had a strong sense of independence and autonomy. They compared the experience of business ownership with their previous experience of working for others and concluded that owning allowed them freedoms they would not be willing to give up. Two of the most important freedoms were freedom from being subject to the authority of others and freedom from dependency. Autonomy was described as the ability to be self determining, in control and responsible for yourself. Financial success added to an overall experience of autonomy and independence by allowing another level of freedom.

The need for an interactive relationship with their environment. Another theme that emerged in this study was the
sense of needing to be in the world. This theme was revealed in the interviews in three ways. First, the women interviewed had a need to stay informed about what was happening in the world around them. They were curious and concerned about current events, and felt compelled to know the details of what was happening in the world at large, especially if it affected their businesses. Secondly, often the women's businesses were used as connecting devices to the world. They watched for trends and important events. The events of the day informed them as to where to take their businesses next, and what was happening in their businesses allowed them to understand world events more clearly. The third expression of needing to be in the world was presented by the women in their attraction to diversity and change. They tended to think that they would be bored without this diversity and its relationship to world events. Staying at home was considered the antithesis of being in the world and a direct route to boredom.

The need to stay informed and current with world events was expressed by one woman in this way:

I think that so much is changing that being self-employed I have to stay somewhat on top of what's going on in the world. I can't stick my head in the sand. I'm effected by it all the time.

This woman, like the others, exhibited a concern about her changing world environment and how it affected her as a business owner. According to the women in the study, owning a business
made them especially influenced by and vulnerable to the changes in current world events.

Understandably, the women were particularly attentive to world as well as local economic situations. They maintained an active interest in any changes of an economic nature and tried to stay informed. For example, while describing the effect of economic trends on her business, one woman expressed her experience this way:

"Totally long term planning. Long, long term and constantly revising and sort of asking always, what's going on in the world? How does that relate to my business? What does that mean I do? Oops, change this, move back. Constantly. Never ending. It's like the railway shunting yard where the cars are constantly being moved from this track to that and you have to too. That's part of staying on top.

The interactive dynamic between world trends and events, and business realities and activities was clearly described by this and other participants. Connecting their business changes to that which was happening around them allowed the women an active relationship with their environment. Their interdependence with the world environment was central to business survival for the women.

These women also considered learning and changing to be normal experiences that were important aspects of their professional lives. They experienced a strong need for diversity and change. They used their understanding of the events around
them to help direct their changes. As reflected in the words of one woman:

I know who I am and I know how I change. Which is another accepted part of doing work. Learning for me is a norm. Learning about and changing therefore is a norm. And so that goes with your career. Your career can evolve. ... This is way more fun because this way as I change and learn and grow so can my career.

The women who participated in this research tended to think that they would be bored without this connection to the world that was provided by their business. They perceived staying at home as the opposite of being in the world. Therefore, staying at home was seen as unattractive because the women thought they would suffer from tedium and ennui, whereas working outside of the home was seen as giving a sense of accomplishment. One woman put it this way:

It's not like at home, you know, that you do a dirty dish and there's another dish. With work, the work is compartmentalized. My work is finished, bang, it's something done. Kind of concrete. The home front kinda seems to blur constantly. Nothing feels finished the same way to me. It's the contact with the world. It's open. It opens me to the world. I mean I'm talking to you. If I were at home I wouldn't be talking to you. Why would I have met you or be talking to you? I'd be talking to my mother or something. To me it's that opening on the world that I find interesting.
This participant, like the others, found life satisfaction through being in business. In her discussion about the tedium of housework, this participant went on to describe her enjoyment of the concreteness of more accomplishment oriented work in the business world and then directly into how this concreteness allows her to be open to the world or be in contact with the world. It is almost like the concreteness of the work frees up a piece of her or presents an aspect of her that is most easily accessible to the world. This is an example of how the women reported seeing the dynamic of housework as opposed to their need to be in the world.

In summary, the women in this research expressed a sense of needing to be in the world. They were curious about current trends and world events, and tried to stay informed. They saw this need to be informed as important to their businesses success as well as an aspect of their attraction to diversity and change. They used their understanding of the changes in their environment to inform their business lives and to keep their businesses from failing. They claimed they would be bored without this ability to be in touch with world events and change with them.

A strong sense of accountability for the progress, success and failure of their businesses. The women who were participants in this research expressed a strong sense of accountability for their businesses. They used words like: "integrity," "moral," "contribution," "congruence," "accountability," "ethical," and "honesty" to describe their experience. The concept
of ethics and ethical behaviour seemed to cover a code of conduct that promoted honesty, fair play, treating people properly and the honoring of commitments. An aspect of this sense of commitment to personal and professional ethics was the importance of integrity and honesty to the women in this study. The women also considered it very important to have their professional lives be in some sort of ethical harmony with their personal lives. The women made known their interest and continued attention to their authenticity or genuineness of self in terms of their personal and professional lives.

An important component to this theme was a strong sense of personal responsibility the women felt for the success or failure of their businesses. Issues concerning money and decision making often put enormous pressure on the women because they felt such intense personal responsibility for their business. They felt great satisfaction if they did not owe any money and had been able to move their businesses out of debt. This personalizing of business concerns often was described as stressful and uncomfortable - a huge weight on their shoulders, and yet, when the women were successful in managing this weight they reaped an incredible sense of personal gratification and self-satisfaction as a result.

A strong sense of commitment to the importance of professional ethics was also exhibited by the women in this study. One woman, in describing part of the reason she decided to start her own business, put it this way:

I'd be looking at the ethical, philosophical base that many firms have and I couldn't find sufficient integrity for my
liking. I might have high standards around that. ... It's hard for me to work for somebody else unless their integrity is impeccable, absolute integrity. And so it is much easier for me to work for myself because I can control that.

This woman's need for a high level of integrity propelled her to go into business for herself. Another woman considered professional ethics to be an aspect of her definition of success. She put it this way: "Success to me in business is to remain moral, which is very easy, in business, not to be. And to treat people properly, employees all that sort of thing."

Another aspect of the theme of the commitment these women had to the importance of personal and professional ethics was reflected in their focus on the relationship between personal ethics and professional ethics. This dynamic was expressed as a drive toward an authentic or genuine expression of themselves in their personal and professional lives, as well as a harmony or agreement in feeling between these two parts of their lives. One woman expressed the need for genuine expression of the full potential of self in this way:

But you are less accountable for your well being when you are working in a system that looks after you. And I think that's an area where we become a bit complacent in terms of our own potential and what we can do with our own potential. So working for yourself allows you to explore your full potential if you chose.

The drive toward harmony or agreement between personal and professional ethics was described by one woman in this way:
They (business people) see my professional life looks like this. My personal life is over here. And yet when you bring it that close it's the same thing. If you planned your work based on the people you are affecting or influencing, you'd come at it quite differently. So that is where the merge becomes evident. Sometimes we forget that we are attached to ourselves. ... To some extent it happens because people develop incongruities or inconsistencies in their behaviour. ... I'm just suggesting that there's some things to be learned from merging professional life with what you do personally. You can better see how to be more effective that way. ... It is basically doing what you believe to be best for all people involved.

An important component to this theme was the sense of personal responsibility the women felt for the success or failure of their businesses. One woman described her feelings of responsibility this way:

I think that it has been incredibly stressful ... in terms of having really bad times in the business where, you don't know whether the banks are going to close you up the next day. Owning lots of money to people and that sort of thing. That is incredibly stressful, that responsibility and on the one hand the responsibility is something that's mine so I can't blame anyone else for it. And in a way that's a great feeling. To know that I can sort of do what I want. ... I like the autonomy but there's a huge responsibility that comes
with it. I like the autonomy and I'm not so crazy about all the responsibility.

Another women described her feelings of incompetence due to a sense of increased responsibility when her business grew dramatically and became increasingly financially successful. She described it in this way:

For ten years I was riding on my instincts, my knowledge, my feelings on what I thought should have been done and stuff like that, which was not always right, decisions to be made. And I started realizing that the decisions I made had a financial implication. Very significant. So when we started booming when we moved here I started feeling incompetent and started feeling I don't know what I'm doing and it took me a while to realize it's nothing to do with me. I'm not stupid. I'm just not educated. I'm lacking knowledge. I did this but I don't know what it is. I'm looking into a MBA.

Although this participant came to see that she was not intrinsically flawed in some way, and therefore, capable of moving her business to the next level of financial success, she still took personal responsibility for the limits of her education in terms of her ability to grow with her business. Several women in the study talked about feelings of incompetence during times of business growth. These feelings were perceived by the women as being due to their lack of education in business.

The women who were able to move their particular businesses out of debt felt satisfaction and pride at their accomplishment and this tied in directly with their sense of
obligation in meeting their commitments. One woman described it this way:

I guess when I took over the business I took it over on a very, very, very tight shoestring budget. To the extent that when you finance the purchase of a business a hundred percent you are actually over extending yourself. There is no question about that and I worked very hard to make my payments and my financial commitments. ... That you have this tremendous obligation. This was their (her parents) retirement money. I did everything and anything in the business, twelve hours a day, six days a week to honor that commitment that I had made and it was mine. ... When I had this debt load over my head it was a difficult time and now I can honestly say I don't owe any money to the bank. The company is debt free. And it's a nice feeling not to have to deal with the bank.

In summary, the women who participated in this research expressed a strong sense of accountability for their businesses as well as a commitment to personal and professional ethics when they described their experience of career as business owners. Ethical conduct was seen as honesty, fair play, treating people properly and honoring commitments. The women talked about their interest in acting with integrity and honesty within the business world and considered it important that their professional lives reflect and are in harmony with their personal lives. A primary component to this theme was the strong sense of
personal responsibility the women felt for the success of failure of their businesses.

A sense of being influenced by the support or lack of support from others. The women who participated in this research felt influenced by the support or lack of support from others. They believe that the support they received from other people was crucial to their ability to own a business, and to the success of their businesses. They defined support in various ways: in tangible terms like financial backing, referrals, rental deals or mentorship; and in emotional terms like advocacy, approval, honest and non-judgmental feedback. One woman defined support as silence from the "nay sayers" in her life. She found that having others withhold their negative feedback allowed her the freedom to do what she needed.

The women in this study recognized and valued the tangible support of others. One woman who considered good support as practical and essential for business survival said it this way:

I think it is totally necessary ... I think that one of the most important things is to have people be interested in what I'm doing as a business person or as a person. ... People say to people, "I know a photographer." ... For getting clients and for feeling good about what I'm doing and for feeling supported.

This woman articulated the shared experience of the study participants when she made known her appreciation of multiple levels and purposes of support. For example, she expressed the importance of support from others that is concrete and pragmatic.
Having a client refer additional clients to her was a sign of client satisfaction. As well as keeping her in business it provided the business owner with a sign of her own competence and emotional support. This was a common experience for the women in the study.

When discussing support the women in this study also referred to the importance of mentors to their lives as business women. One woman put it this way:

I've had tremendous support from business men. I've had male mentors. I've never had a female mentor, coincidentally. I've always had male mentors, successful men. ... We've had mutual respect and admiration for each other.

Mentorship was discussed by most of the women in this study with all but one mentor being male. According to the women these mentors provided them with role modeling, training in critical thinking, support in skill development as well as jobs and clients. For example, in discussing support and mentorship one woman described her experience this way:

I had a boss who I guess I would call a mentor, although he wasn't entrepreneurial himself. He certainly taught me how to think. He was Jesuit trained and he was merciless on an illogical argument. And he certainly taught me how to discipline my mind, to look at the real issue and to stay true to the argument when you are going to engage with someone. Not to use the art of the cheap shot, that sort of
thing. He had a tremendous sense of humor so he taught me how to bring a lot of fun into the work place too.

Like the others, this woman enjoyed and appreciated her relationship with mentor. The mentors provided the women with challenges, training in skills, and valuable contacts that were transferable to their businesses and careers as business owners.

The women considered the emotional support of others to be an essential ingredient to their personal and professional well-being. Partners, parents, and friends often provided the women with the support they needed. One woman discussed the support she received from her husband in this way:

   The support of others comes exclusively from my husband. Absolute acceptance that of course I can do this. "You are going to be fabulous at whatever it is you undertake. Because you are you." And that is what I needed to hear. I needed one person to say, without qualification, "You'll do it and you'll do it great."

The women in this study saw it as a requirement to business survival that they have a supportive life partner, or no partner at all. Four of the ten participants mentioned partners who had been non-supportive or damaging in some way to their businesses in the past. In all four cases the women had ended the relationships. Five of the ten women partnered relatively late in life, waiting until they were in their late forties or early fifties. The single women saw supportiveness as a primary ingredient in any future partner. The women in the study seemed to prefer singleness to
an intimate relationship that was not supportive to their lives as business owners.

According to the women in this study support in a life partner was conceptualized in the following ways: the partner should understand the business owner's need to work long hours; he or she should be willing to socialize with important colleagues and clients; he or she should be willing to dialogue about business concerns after hours, as well as help the business owner cease dwelling on the business after work; and he or she should support the business owner's need for added help on the home front. One woman expressed her experience of support in this way:

We've had to have a nanny and for the first few years I was hardly able to draw a salary. So that was a commitment that M made that he had no problem with. He said, "Fine, if this is what you want to do I'm prepared to support you in whatever way. Financially, emotionally whatever."

Having good life partner support was considered essential to the women's ability to own their own businesses as well as the success of that business.

Contrary to the above examples of supportive intimate relationships, several research participants reported experiences with previous life partners that had actually challenged their businesses survival. Four of the ten participant reported experiences with past partners who had been jealous of the business owners' success, and/or who overspent, and/or vied for control of the women's businesses. These issues were primary motivations for divorces among the women. As well as
threatening the survival of the businesses these experiences were emotionally difficult and painful for the women in this study.

The critical importance of partner support was evident with the experience of one participant. It was not until the end of her relationship with her life partner that she was free to go forward with her vision of owning her own business. She expressed her experience in this way:

One of the reasons I did this finally was because I didn't have anyone telling me I couldn't do it. And that's what I had experienced when I was in a relationship. ... The best support I could have was having the freedom to just to go out and do it. Freedom is support in that sense, you know. Because there was nobody there to say, "You can't do this. You will fail." Nobody was there to do that. I'd heard that a lot in my life.

Generally, the women in the study did not perceive institutions to be very supportive of their efforts to succeed in business. The banks and the school system were two institutions repeatedly referred to by the women as non-supportive. Most women interviewed experienced sexism when dealing with the banks. One woman told her story this way:

I was feeling very discriminated against and very angry. It was the same bank. I had all these loans but because they were cosigned they somehow didn't give me a track record even though I paid them off. ... I said, "Look." I got right in his face. "I'm so sick of this. Every time I come in for a loan you guys say next time. Next time it's a new person. They
don't know me from diddle. They don't care. When do I get a track record? When do you care what I've done before?"
And he said, "Next time." I said, "Right. Sure. And will you be here?" And he said, "I'll be here." ... He has been so much in my corner. He gives me money. He loans me money when he wouldn't have if he didn't know me. ... He's shown a whole lot of confidence in me and under those circumstances I wouldn't let him down.

This woman was successful in turning a normally non-supportive experience of relationship with the bank to a more personal and supportive one resulting in the viability of her business which required business loans on a regular basis.

Her story points to several components considered important to the women in terms of their appreciation for the support of others. Generally they considered banks non-supportive and prejudiced against women in business; that good support required personal contact and connection; that good support went further than is usual; and that good support was interactive or mutual - there was give and take.

The mothers in the study saw the school system as especially non-supportive of their efforts as business women. As one woman put it: "I don't think the school system has one teeny weenie little ounce of support for working women." Of particular concern were the half-days and professional days without back up daycare in the elementary schools, and the school-based expectations of parental help with homework. Three of the seven mothers in the study thought that teachers assumed that there
were non-working people at home to help with the children. They considered this strange because most teachers of young children are working women too.

In summary, positive support from others was seen by the women in this research as necessary and helpful to their lives and their success as business owners. The women appreciated the people and institutions that were able to give them the support they needed. Generally, however banks and the school system were not experienced as being particularly supportive. The women viewed good support as tangible, as well as emotional, requiring give and take. The women in this study had experiences of supportive relationships, including intimate life partners. Non-supportive relationships resulted in problems for the women's businesses. None of the women in the study reported being in a non-supportive relationship at the time of the interview.

A strong sense of connection with and contribution to others through their work. The women who participated in this research tended to achieve a strong sense of connection with other people through their businesses. They also felt that they were able to contribute to others. Although each woman made contact with people in different ways, they experienced the process of making these connections as one of the most satisfying aspects of their work. Connecting with and contributing to others encompassed anything from facilitating them, counselling them, interacting with them, talking over the phone, networking and selling, and sharing ideas with them suggesting that they were
quite people-oriented. As one woman put it: "The more people I know the happier I am."

Connecting with others was an inspiring part of many of the study participants' work experience. One woman explained it this way:

I like to stay motivated verbally and by connecting with people. I love business luncheons. Talking to all sorts of different people. You always hear such different things from different people. The stories, the experiences, the analyses and the evaluations and stuff. How they perceive things and what they think is going on. That always interests me a lot.

Like the many of the women in the study, this woman enjoyed sharing ideas with other people and found that her career and business provided her with access to this contact.

Consistent with this theme, making contact with others was often a central part of the women's businesses. For example, one participant's company worked with organizations helping them overcome employee conflicts and develop team vision. She expressed her appreciation for watching people change under her guidance, as well as an awareness of the importance of knowing where and when a relationship should end.

They start to appreciate each other again. I love to watch that. ... They learn from each other. ... All of a sudden, lights are on. I just revive their curiosity. Sure is exciting. I worry sometimes when they get to a point and you are not sure whether they've got it; a good enough sense of the process to
take it further. ... I don't want a dependency relationship. ... 
You have to let go.

This quote expresses aspects of the theme that emerged in the other interviews - the importance of having a visible contribution to others as well as the importance of not creating dependency.

Although making contact with others was a component of most of the businesses of the women in the study, allowing that connection to include a sense of personal contribution provided the women with more satisfaction. Stressing the importance of the contribution she made with her work one woman said:

I've always had an urge toward some kind of teaching. ... I facilitate for people. How I support people in feeling comfortable in front of the camera, more comfortable than they are used to feeling. So to me that is a facilitation role. And it is some thing they count on me to do that not everybody can do.

She, like other participants, enjoyed and acknowledged her particular capacity to connect with her clients in such a way as to facilitate their comfort. This woman, in similar ways as the other participants, saw her unique ability as a way she contributed to others, and through that she achieved a level of connection that she found particularly satisfying.

An important part of this theme was also the women's need to have some level of control over their contact with others. This seemed to imply that while the women enjoyed and fostered connection with others through their businesses and found considerable enjoyment in their ability to contribute to others
through this connection, they also controlled that contact to keep it within their limits. One woman put it this way:

In this career I have a lot of contact with people even though I work alone. I have the right amount of people for me because it is more or less on my terms. If I had employees it would not be so much on my terms.

This participant, like the others, enjoyed the balance between working alone and working for clients. This allowed her the amount of contact with others she liked. Controlling, to some extent, the amount of connection with others was a significant issue for the women in the study. They required a certain level of solitude to maintain themselves in their work. Owning their own businesses allowed them the control they needed to strike a balance between connection and separation with others.

In summary, the women who took part in this study achieved a strong sense of connection with and contribution to others through their businesses. They enjoyed interacting with others and saw it as a reward for owning a business. They found both the connections they made with others and the contributions they made to others to be satisfying. The women also experienced a need to control their contact with others to some extent. Some participants were cautious not to promote dependency in their clients, while others resisted hiring employees or having partners, suggesting that the women in this study found it important to control and balance their need for connection with others and their need to be alone. By choosing to own their own businesses
they had control over the amount and type of contact they had with others.
CHAPTER FIVE
Discussion

It was the purpose of this study to explore the experience of career as a business owner for women. The research question asked was What is the experience of career for women who own businesses? In this chapter the essential structure or shared narrative will be presented representing a synopsis of the women's experience. The common themes emerging from the women's stories and descriptions will be discussed as they relate to the literature on career development for women and the literature on the female business owner and her experience of career. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the future research and counselling implication arising out of the study.

Essential Structure

The goal of the phenomenological method of study is the achievement of an "exhaustive description" (Colaizzi, 1978) of the phenomena researched. The following exhaustive description portrays the "fundamental structure" (Colaizzi) or essential structure of the women's experience of career as business owners.

The experience of career for these female business owners was characterized by an overall movement toward freedom and the prospect of having a more creative working environment. The women in this study saw themselves as having a strong sense of independence as well as very strong needs for autonomy.

Although the story of what brought each woman to owning a business was different, the overall experience of career pre-
ownership was one of frustration with the parameters set by previous employers and organizations. That is, the women thought they were unable to achieve, make money, or evolve and change in the ways they wanted within the parameters set by others. They also had the sense that they could not be fully themselves or influence things as well as they would like from inside an organization. The women all believed that business ownership would potentially offer them the freedom they needed to express themselves more fully, to be creative in the ways they would like, and to control their environments the way they saw fit.

For some of the women the pursuit of their own business was based on following their long-held dreams. Some bought existing businesses, while others responded to perceived needs and market opportunities and created something quite unique. Still others continued in their previous professions doing what they did as employees, only on their own.

The women drew from what they considered unique about themselves, as well as their training and education, to chose what their business would focus on. During the time of change they needed to make a leap of faith, or take a risk, and during these times they required the support of others to help them make the change.

During the first three to five years of their business ownership the women who participated in this research had similar struggles. The overall effort was one of getting their businesses up and running. The businesses needed to make enough money to pay off start up loans, taxes, advertising, general
overhead costs, initial purchase costs, as well as salaries for their employees and, if possible, for themselves. These expenses and pressures forced the women to work long hours, do nearly everything in their business themselves rather than hire employees or delegate, focus on the needs of the business over the needs and demands of significant others. The demands of the first five years in business took their toll, with some women reporting having endangered their health through overwork.

The overall struggle for the women after the early stages of their business career was one of trying to achieve some sort of balance in their lives after years of intense business focus. The women had a great appreciation for the support of others who helped them get through the early and difficult times of their businesses. Those women who were in life-partner relationships also appreciated their significant others who had been and continued to be supportive to them. Those who had had non supportive partners in the past discussed these relationships in terms of the effect on themselves and their businesses. These women reported on the detrimental effect of jealousy, overspending and/or lack of sufficient support for the long hours and other business needs they experienced in these non-supportive relationships.

As far as overall career satisfaction, the women who participated in this study enjoyed their businesses mainly because they saw the original conception of the business and its growth as a representation of themselves or their identity. As the businesses grew and the women strove for more balance in their lives they
became less personally identified and attached to their businesses. An equally important part of career satisfaction for the women came from the recognition and validation for what they had done, from both themselves and others.

The women were consistently proud of their business accomplishments and clearly enjoyed the respect and acknowledgment they received from others. Another source of satisfaction came to the women from the contribution they could make to others through their work. Consistently, the women claimed that they welcomed the opportunities they had to contribute to others in whatever way their businesses allowed them.

A more subtle but equally significant aspect of the women's experiences of career satisfaction was the sense of connection with others their businesses provided. The women saw their businesses as devices to create and maintain alliances with other people. Their businesses provided them with ready-made ways of being in relationship with others. Furthermore, they were able to control who they connected with as well as the amount of time spent associating with others because they were business owners.

The women's businesses also provided them with a way of being in the world. They desired an interactive relationship with their environments; one where they affected their environments and their environments affected them. This association provided them with the information they needed to keep in business, as well as providing opportunities to keep changing, learning and
growing, and enough variety in their business lives to keep them feeling fulfilled.

All the participants saw personal and professional integrity as important to their sense of well being. The women took full personal responsibility for their businesses. They often felt stressed by the amount of responsibility they shouldered for their businesses. They considered themselves accountable for the progress and successes of their businesses, as well as any failures or errors of judgment.

In summary, the business owners who participated in the study started their businesses because they were in some way frustrated by what they were doing as employees for others. A dream from the past, an intuition, or an opportunity propelled them into their chosen business. The final component that was necessary for the women to chose business ownership was their ability and willingness to take risks.

The women worked hard to start up their businesses. They struggled with competing demands and worked to find balance in their lives. Many of them continue to struggle with the competing needs of their busy lives. The business owners interviewed for this study appreciated and required the support of others. They felt great satisfaction for what they had accomplished in their businesses and enjoyed the independence and autonomy owning a business allowed them. Despite the struggles involved they would not change it for anything.
Discussion of the Findings

The content of these themes will be discussed as they relate to the literature available on women's career development, the female business owner, and the experience of business ownership for women.

**Women's Career Development.** According to the literature on women and career development, the major factor that differentiates women's experience of career from that of men's is that women have more permeable boundaries between their professional lives and their personal lives (Gallos, 1989). They are, therefore, likely to struggle with the competing roles of household worker and paid worker (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987), and to be challenged with the relativity of specific life paths (Giele, 1982). Consistent with the literature, the women in this study experienced a sense of struggle to achieve balance in their lives. An important aspect of this struggle involved dealing with the competing demands of their relationships and home lives, and their work. However, while it was difficult for the women to manage the multiple demands of their work and home lives, they also reported enjoying the richness created by these dual roles.

Gallos (1982) claims that another recurring theme in women's career choices is the need to manage the attachments, relationships and accomplishments that weave through their life phases. Indeed, the women in the study struggled with managing all the different demands of their lives. Furthermore, their different life phases were evident in their struggles. For example, one woman was challenged with the pressure of caring for her
dying mother as well as keeping her business viable, while another worked hard to have her business running without her so she could stay home with her infant children. Yet another endeavored to manage her thriving business and deal with particularly difficult menopause symptoms. The experiences of these three business owners demonstrate Gallos' claim that women's attachments, relationships and accomplishments require attention in terms of women's life phases, adding considerable challenge to the task of creating a thriving and successful business.

Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers (1983) found that women in mid-life required a combination of achievement and accomplishment with pleasure for a full life. Specifically, for the women in their study, pleasure came from the quality of their relationships. Similarly, relationships with others were very important to the women in this study. Nearly every theme drawn from the women's experiences had an aspect that related to their relationships with others and the quality of those relationships. For example, the women experienced support from others as necessary and appreciated. The quality of the support was equally important. The women in this study reported the process of making connections and contributions to others as one of the most satisfying aspects of owning a business. Clearly, relationships and the quality of those relationships were an important factor in the career choices and satisfaction of the women in the study.

An important part of the participants' process of becoming business owners involved a desire for the autonomy and
independence that would allow expression of themselves. According to Hardesty and Jacobs (1986), women want opportunities to be themselves at work. The women in the study experienced a strong desire to be themselves in their work, and reported that this was one of their primary reasons for choosing self-employment. This was also reflected in the theme "a sense of career as a representation of the self" in which the women's sense of self and career development were experienced as intertwined and interdependent.

This desire for career opportunities that allowed them to be themselves was also reflected in the women's sense of themselves as unique. They considered themselves unable to access their uniqueness working for others and, therefore, chose self employment. Their ability to recognize and validate themselves for their unique strengths facilitated their choices in the types of businesses they selected to participate in, thereby ensuring that they made "truly fitting career choices" (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 251).

The career development literature claims that researchers and theorists need to pay attention to the multiple factors included in the overall picture of career development for women (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Gallos, 1989; Giele, 1982). It is clear from the present study that many factors influenced the women's career paths. The women in this study were passionately committed to what they did as a career and their sense of self development and career development was intertwined. They also chose their careers as business owners to make a good living and
potentially be more accessible to their families, underscoring the importance of relationships and balance in their personal and career lives.

Similar to the claim by Hardesty and Jacobs (1986) that success is more than professional achievement to women, the women in this study reported needing more than achievements and financially success to feel successful. This group of women claimed they needed balance in their lives to feel successful. Achieving a balanced life included having time for leisure activities, physical fitness, and intimate relationships, as well as being able to keep their businesses in harmony with their personal ethical beliefs.

The Female Business Owner or The Entrepreneurial Woman. Many theorists and researchers claim that there are differences between the entrepreneurial woman of twenty years ago and today (Bowen & Hisrich, 1986; Gregg, 1985; Moore, Buttner, & Rosen, 1992). They suggest that the modern female business owner, or "new modern," (Moore et al., 1992, p. 89) is more likely to have worked in a corporate organizational environment than her predecessor, the "traditional", who had liberal arts backgrounds, created businesses within the service industry and had limited access to capital, management experience (Gregg, 1985). This distinction is not consistent with the findings of this study. Some of the women participating in this study matched the criteria of the "new modern" entrepreneur, while others corresponded with the definition of the "traditional" entrepreneur, or a combination of the two. Irrespective of
whether they matched the traditional or new moderns criteria, there were common experiences.

In 1982, Hisrich and Brush (1988) surveyed 468 entrepreneurial women in the United States and found that female entrepreneurs tended to be 35-45 years old, first born children from middle to upper class families. Half the women in the present study were older than those in Hisrich and Brush's study and one was younger, leaving four out of ten within the 35-45 year old age range. Seven out of the ten women were first born children, and all but two came from middle or upper class families.

Hisrich and Brush's entrepreneurs were well educated with well educated, financially successful, and supportive spouses. Scott's (1986) sample of female entrepreneurs from Georgia were also highly educated. Similarly all but one of the business owners in this study had college degrees. However, only four out of the ten women had financially successful and supportive spouses. Two of those four married their spouses after their businesses were running and successful. Four of the women were single at the time of their interviews and two of the women's spouses worked for them.

Similar to the findings of Moore, Buttner, and Rosen (1992) from the Academy of Management Roundtable, the participants in this study reported experiencing funding barriers for their enterprises with many finding banks unwilling to support their ventures. While this may be a difficulty experienced by all new business owners, it is clear that the women in this study bumped
up against structural barriers as business owners that appear to be a challenging as the barriers encountered by women in large organizations. They reported difficulty getting loans, increased need for support, sexism, as well as frustrations with business partners and customers. Yet, they also reported experiencing independence and autonomy as business owners. The phenomenological mode of exploration used in this study allowed for the expression of contradictory results while results based on surveys and test scores do not.

Neider (1987) described the demographic and personality characteristics of 52 female entrepreneurs. Consistent with Neider's findings the participants of the present study reported having male mentors from prior jobs, experiencing accountability for themselves and their businesses, and being independent and action-oriented. However, this study's participants were more likely to chose self-employment for reasons of personal satisfaction and mention money as a primary motivation for starting a businesses than Neider's entrepreneurs. These variations may be due to the differences in the research approaches. The phenomenological approach used in the present study may have provided the participants with a safer venue to discuss issues like money and self-satisfaction, which are normally socially difficult for women.

Longstreth, Stafford, and Maudlin (1987) found that full-time business owners worked five to six hours a day in their households, and were no more likely to hire outside help for their home needs than women who ran businesses on a half-time basis.
While the women in the present study struggled with these extra housework hours, they were more likely to benefit from outside help than Longstreth et al.'s business owners. This may be an indication that women in the nineties are dealing more self-protectively with the dangers of overwork and taking necessary steps by getting and paying for outside help.

**The Experience of Business Ownership for Women.**

Goffee and Scase (1985) interviewed 44 female business owners and developed four types of business owner based on their attitudes toward profit-making and gender stereotypes. The experiences of the participants in the present study can be differentiated and defined by Goffee and Scase's typology to some extent. The distinguishing characteristics of the conventional businesswomen, domestic traders and innovative entrepreneurs were present for the women of this study. However, the characteristics of the radical proprietors found by Goffee and Scase were not evident in the women participating in the present study.

Chaganti (1986) examined the management styles of eight business owning women and found that they chose entrepreneurship to escape social or organizational barriers to success. The reports of the women in the present study concur with these findings, in that the participants claimed that self-employment freed them from the constraints of previous employment situations, and/or from potential poverty, and/or from dangerous or unhappy marriage situations.
Chaganti (1986) claimed that her entrepreneurs wanted to be the best in their areas and worked hard to make their businesses successful. This competitive spirit was supported in the present research and was reflected in the participants' desire for recognition and validation and their strong sense of accountability for their successes. Similar to Chaganti's entrepreneurs, some of the women who participated in this study reported experiencing difficulty procuring money for starting their businesses and many took courses in financial management and business planning.

According to Chaganti, female entrepreneurs are more "people-oriented" and less autocratic in their management style than male entrepreneurs. The present study made no effort to compare female to male business owners, however, it is clear from the data that this group of female business owners were people-oriented women who desired both connection with and contribution to others. The results of the present study support Chaganti's findings. The correspondence may be due to the similar research methodologies.

Young and Richards (1992) explored the meaning of female business owners' career experiences and the way women formulate the meaning of relationships within these experiences. These researchers found that each woman's business ownership experience allowed for a type of work that was more consistent with herself as a woman. Similarly, the women in the present study chose their type of businesses based on their interests and identities. This was reflected in the themes "career as a representation of identity" and "sense of being unique". Many of
the women in this study referred to their businesses in terms of consequences to their homelife and relationships, particularly to their children, and often chose their particular business because they felt it would better allow them the freedom to mother.

The women in the present study saw their businesses as a way of connecting to others and the world at large. Young and Richards (1992) also found that women business owners utilized the relational perspective or relational construct to express the movement and quality of their careers. These authors point out the importance of the support of others in the development and continuation of their business owners' businesses, citing partnerships, mentors, networks and friendships as being the women's primary sources of support. Some of Young and Richards' participants also claimed that they lacked interpersonal support. The present study found a similar dynamic at play with this group of women business owners. While the support of others was necessary and appreciated by most participants, some claimed they received no interpersonal support along their way and that this lack of support was itself a motivation for their business efforts.

The results of the present study are consistent with the findings of Young and Richards which indicated that female entrepreneurs struggled with tensions between family and career commitments, considered the maintenance of their relationships important, and experienced business ownership as providing them with personal fulfillment and a sense of agency. As predicted based on the similarities in topic and research methodologies, the
results of the present study support and replicate the findings of Young and Richards.

The women in the present study were anxious to talk about their experiences as business owners. When provided with an atmosphere and relationship conducive to describing their experiences freely, they expressed their needs, frustrations and joys as business owners. The various differences in results found in this discussion may be based on differences in the types of research used to explore this population. The phenomenological approach provided the present study with data based on the intensive focus on the participants' subjective experience as business owners.

Implications for Further Research

This study involved an examination of the career experiences of women who own businesses. Phenomenology is about building blocks or beginning to understand women's experiences from their perspective without preconceived notions. Along with the study conducted by Young and Richards (1992), this study is, to my knowledge, one of the first to examine this experience using a phenomenological approach. Therefore, additional studies will be required to further refine the themes identified in the study and to learn more about the experiences of diverse groups of business owners.

Based on the results of this study it is possible to see where additional research is needed. Arising from the recognized limitations of the present study are suggestions for new studies as well as modifications of this study that may help future
researchers when exploring the career lives of business owning women. In the following section some of these suggestions will be discussed.

Ten middle class, Caucasian women were interviewed for this study. This is a small homogeneous sample in accord to the demands of phenomenological research methodology. Most of the participants owned businesses in the service or the manufacturing sector. Therefore, it is impossible to assume that the information garnered from these interviews will fit all female business owners. The findings of this study may be significantly different from a study with participants from different cultures or from professions in other areas. Future researchers interested in this subject may find it advantageous to address the experience of business ownership for women from different cultures or classes. Furthermore, it may be useful to research the career experience of women who own businesses in male dominated areas of the economy, or some other area that is distinct within itself.

The results of this research can not be generalized to all women who own businesses. However, they are transferable or empathically generalizable (Osborne, 1984) given that most women who own businesses are white and middle-class and are, therefore, likely to see their experience reflected in the themes presented in this study. This study provides a good starting point, identifying some very common themes that may be experienced by business owners of all races, classes or business types.

In view of the limits inherent in the collection of data based on two interviews, it may be profitable to the overall research on
women and business ownership to follow several women for two or three years while they construct their businesses. This would provide richer descriptive information on the early stages of business ownership which would significantly add to the overall research literature on women in business.

The present study focused on the overall experience of women in business ownership. One of the criteria for participant selection was that the women be in business for a minimum of two years. In fact the women who participated in this study had owned their businesses for an average of ten years. This implies that the participants of the present study had achieved a certain level of economic success as well as business stability. These are the business survivors, successful women who have made it as business owners not those who have encountered business failure.

It may be advantageous to interview business owners who were in the process of encountering difficulties or failures in their businesses in order to explore women's experience of business struggle. A phenomenological study addressing this area of interest may benefit the research literature on women who own businesses as a whole because it may provide the reader with important descriptive information concerning women's business struggles as well as include some possible solutions or explanations.

Counselling Implications

It is apparent that women who own businesses are a distinct group in terms of employment experience; women with discrete strengths, challenges and needs. Business ownership takes up a
major portion of women's lives in both the initial and later stages of business development. In the earlier stages of business ownership the women in the present study saw their businesses as an aspect of their identity. Although, personal identification with their business was considered instrumental to the creation and the early maintenance of the business, the women grew to see this identification as limiting and inadequate after the business had become somewhat stable.

The transition from strong personal identification with their business to a sense of identity based on a broader foundation may be assisted by counselling professionals. In seeking such help a woman may be looking for validation of her experiences, particularly in terms of how her sense of self and her career development are intertwined and inter dependent. She would require support through her transformation of identity to help her develop a more personally valid and satisfying sense of self based on what is important and worthwhile to her.

The counsellor's task is to provide the business owner who is in identity transition with empathic listening, as well as educational information about the normative processes for women in terms of years in business and women's development in general. This may provide the business owner with a smoother transformation into a fuller and more balanced life, and a more adequate sense of self.

Another objective of counselling is to assist clients to effectively cope with and grow through difficult experiences or struggles in their lives. The women in this study struggle to
achieve balance in their lives throughout the course of their work lives. In the early years of their businesses they sought equilibrium for their businesses, working hard to pay off debts, gain a strong reputation and generally achieve a viable and thriving business. The counsellor working with a woman whose business is in the early stages of development must be comfortable with the client's intense focus on her business and see that this focus is normal and necessary.

In the early years of business the female business owner needs empathic support, as well as suggestions as to resources and networks. The business owners in this study require emotional as well as tangible assistance. Support during this time of business operation may include providing a space for the business owner to express the full range of emotions, as well as practical suggestions and reminders especially in terms of emotional self care.

During the later stages of business ownership the women in this study struggle to achieve balance between their professional and private lives. Women at this stage of business ownership may require counsellors who can support their efforts to achieve equilibrium between their professional and personal lives. Somewhat similar to the movement toward a more adequate and full sense of identity discussed above, this transition may be more tangible and less existential than the transformation of identity.

The counsellor working with the business owner at this stage needs to be comfortable with the client's desire to try on new experiences and drop aspects of her career life previously considered paramount. For example, three participants in this
study took up oil painting, selling dog food door to door and horse back riding in their search for balance in their lives. Women may need support to risk trying something new and different, as well as letting go of their intense focus or extensive hours with their businesses.

The counsellor working with female business owners may have to challenge his or her own beliefs concerning women and what constitutes appropriate behaviour for women. Many of the women in this study chose to forgo relationships and marriage in the early years of their businesses. Many were unable or unwilling to focus on family members, including aging parents, spouses and children. Most chose to focus entirely on the development and maintenance of their businesses.

Some counsellors may find this behaviour unusual, unfeminine or perhaps unhealthy. It is important for the counsellor working with women starting, developing, or maintaining fledgling businesses to consider whether they would judge the same behaviour unusual, unmasculine or unhealthy in men. The counsellor working with women who own businesses needs to question his or her presuppositions carefully and guard against unconscious or conscious sexist responses or bias.

Finally, one of the characteristic experiences of the women in this study who owned businesses was their strong sense of appreciation for the support of others. In order for their businesses to flourish these women require support. However, many women go to counselling because they are in difficult and non supportive relationships, both personal and professional. The
counsellor working with women who own businesses needs to be mindful of this dynamic.

Issues like life-partner jealousy and overspending undermined some of women in this study to the extent of near business failure. These women chose divorce before their businesses failed. However, the counsellor should guard against putting the marriage before the business if this is not what the woman wants. Couples therapy from a feminist orientation may be beneficial to resolve the underlying power issues involved in these issues.

In summary, the participants in this study were generally mentally healthy women who engaged in life in dynamic and self esteem supporting ways. Any counselling needs they might have would be directly related to the development pressures of their businesses and later, as their ventures stabilize, to their struggle to maintain a life in the face of their business demands.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Consent Form

A Masters Thesis research study

The Experience of Career for Women Who Own Businesses

Description of the Research:

This research is exploring women’s experience of being a business owner, and is being completed as part of the requirements for a Masters of Arts degree in Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of women who select business ownership as a career path and to begin to understand how these women meaningfully construct their experience of career. The research question is: What is the experience of being a business owner for women?

The researcher will meet with you on two occasions for approximately three hours in total. The purpose of these interviews is to hear and document your lived experience of being a business owner. In particular the study is aimed at exploring what the experience of being a business owner means to you. The first session will be audio taped and transcribed into a written text. All information that might identify you will be removed from the transcripts as well as the final text. You will be asked to pick a
pseudonym for yourself and your business which will be used in any oral or written accounts of the material you present.

You will be contacted after the first session is transcribed and asked to read the descriptions and themes found in the material. You will be asked to indicate whether they accurately portray your experience.

Any concerns or disagreements you have regarding the material at this point will be taken into account and all the necessary adjustments will be made to the final account to make it as consistent as possible with your experience. Any additional information that you remember after the first interview and transcript reading will be added to the original text. The audio tapes will be erased following the transcription of the material. No identifying information will be made available to anyone other than the investigator and her research supervisor. You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time for any reason and your right to do so will be respected.
If any aspect of the study remains unclear, or if you have any further questions, please contact Louise Chivers, at 224-1754, or call the research supervisor, Dr. Judith Daniluk at 822-5768.

I, ____________________________ agree to participate in the study described above under the conditions outlined. I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form. I have read it thoroughly.

Date: __________________________

Signature: _______________________

Investigator:

Louise Chivers, B.A., M.A. Candidate
Department of Counselling Psychology
Faculty of Education, U.B.C.

Residence: 224-1754
Business: 253-0143
Appendix B

Orienting Statement

The following statement will be read by the interviewer to all participants at the beginning of the first personal research interview.

Before we begin this interview I would like to give you a little background on this research study so you will understand what I am trying to find out with this research.

This research grew out of my observation that many women are starting new businesses. I am interested in the experience of these business owners and wonder how they make sense of their experience as career. While there have been a number of studies done on the personal and career development of women in general, and on women in business, there is only a limited amount of research looking at female business owners in terms of their experience of career.

The purpose of this interview is for me to gain some insight into your experience as a business owner. I want to know how you see your career and what it means to you.

Take as long as you want to describe your experiences. I will ask you questions to help me clarify what you mean or get more information about a particular statement, issue or aspect of your
experience. Does this feel comfortable for you? Do you have any questions before we begin?
Appendix C
Interview Questions

General research question:
What is the experience of career for women who own businesses?

Principal interview questions:
Would you please tell me about your life as a business owner? A) amount of time involved in own business. What did you do before? amount of time? B) Focus of business C) Number of employees D) Partners, E) Home configuration.

What does your career mean to you?
How has this meaning changed over time?

What aspects of your experience as a business owner are most rewarding?

What aspects of your experience as a business owner are most challenging?

What major turning points have you encountered as your career has progressed?

How has the support of others influenced your career progress as a business owner?

If you were talking to a woman who is considering starting her own business what would you tell her.
If these topics do not naturally arise they will be pursued:

How has your career as a business owner affected your relationships and visa versa?

What is your definitions for networking, support and leisure?

How do you define success?

Do you experience barriers to your or your business’ success?

Please describe.