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Ladies Who Launch organization : a case study of women entrepreneurs

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The University of San Francisco

LADIES WHO LAUNCH ORGANIZATION:
A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Organization and Leadership Program
University of San Francisco

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By

Dorothy Raab

San Francisco
May 2008

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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CHAPTER I

RESEARCH PROBLEM

“In the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of their husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could”

Abigail Adams, letter to John Adams, March 31, 1776

(McGovern et al., 2005, p. 3).

Introduction

The numbers of women managers in top executive positions in large companies is on the decline in the twenty-first century. According to Tischler (2004):

Women are as scarce in the upper reaches of the legal profession as they are in the top-tier corporate offices. By 2004, after three decades of the women’s movement, when business schools annually graduate thousands of qualified young women, when the managerial pipeline is stuffed with capable, talented female candidates for senior positions, why are there so few women at the top? (¶ 27)

According to the research done by Catalyst (2002), “women fill only 9.9% of the total line positions held by corporate officers compared to men who fill 90.1%. Line positions are those with revenue-generating or profit-and-loss responsibility” (p. 1). Increases of women officers in the corporate offices of *Fortune 500* companies went from 12.4% in 2001 to 15.7% in 2003, which is significant but not impressive. Catalyst projects that “it will take 47 years for women to reach parity with men as corporate officers of the *Fortune 500*, and 73 years for women to reach parity with men in the boardrooms of *Fortune 500* companies” (Catalyst, 2007b, p. 1).

According to Margaret Heffernan (2002), former CEO of CMGI, businesswomen are rapidly leaving the corporate world due to the unnatural fit that women experience in the traditional framework of commerce. She stated:

Women leave because they want to work differently and because they don't want to have to add the second job of becoming a change agent to their existing job. Women don't want to redecorate the company. They want to build something new, different, and theirs-from scratch. (Toxic Bosses section, ¶ 2)

Women have historically found it difficult to enter into the world of corporate business. Traditionally, in the United States, men have dominated the leadership levels in private and public domains of these enterprises. The seen and unseen obstacles of tradition and prejudice, put in place by male dominated businesses, have frustrated women with creative business acumen. Hymowitz and Schellhardt (1986) attribute these obstacles as forming the "Glass Ceiling, an invisible barrier to the executive suite" (p. 1). This imperceptible dome has forced a growing number of educated and experienced businesswomen to leave the arena of established corporations. They have become frustrated with the slow progress to top executive positions, along with long hours and salaries that do not reflect the level of their education and experience. They are resisting the hostile work environment with men who view them as unnecessary and unwanted competition. They are taking a step aside to assess who they are and where they want to go. Women have finally realized that differences in women's and men's work do not imply that "different from", will morph into "less than" (Heffernan, 2002, Women Work section, ¶ 1). With this realization in mind, these same women are launching and managing their own companies, showing an unprecedented entrepreneurial spirit in the twenty-first century.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (2005), the growth of women in self-employed jobs has shown steady increase. Since 1995, from a total population of 10.4 million, women comprised 3.8 million self-employed businesses (U.S. Department of Labor, Occupations section). The U.S. Department of Labor (2005)

projected this increase to continue into 2014, with women comprising 47 % of the total labor force in the US (Labor Force Participation section).

An expansion of this magnitude creates concerns and questions about the survival rate of women-owned businesses. What supports exist to stabilize, encourage, and promote these women entrepreneurs? What organizational opportunities exist for women starting their own businesses, which provide leadership development and opportunities?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explain the motivating factors of women choosing the field of entrepreneurship and joining the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. It provides an analysis of the impact this organization has on furthering the trend of entrepreneurship in women and the benefits women gain by joining this organization. This study sought to describe the positive influence the *Ladies Who Launch* organization has upon members in increasing their leadership skills in business.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used in this study that directly relate to business, women entrepreneurs, and the *Ladies Who Launch* organization.

Achievement-Motivation: An individual's desire to compete and succeed with a standard of excellence in a business venture.

Business: A commercial or industrial establishment

Business Incubation: A business support process that accelerates the successful development of star-up and fledgling companies by providing entrepreneurs with an array of targeted resources and services.

Chapter Member: Members of the *Ladies Who Launch* that attend monthly meetings in a

confidential environment with a maximum of eight participants.

Corporation: A group of people organized, as to operate a business, under a charter granting them as a body some of the legal rights, etc. of an individual.

Entrepreneur: One who organizes a business undertaking, assuming the risk for the sake of the profit.

Entrepreneurship: The state of owning or starting a business venture.

Ladies Who Launch: A peer advisory and networking entrepreneurial organization, whose members are a diverse group of entrepreneurial women, who have started their businesses through an incubator program offered by the organization, and who assist new women entrepreneurs to discover a project to start their own businesses.

Leadership: The founder of a company that exhibits the qualities required to lead their company to financial success.

Ladies Who Launch Incubator Group: New members, of only eight participants, who attend four sessions once a month to discover and develop a business project, and to refine business and leadership skills before “launching” their own business.

Organization: Any organized group.

Peer Advisory Group: Chapter members who are founders of their own company, and who seek to empower other chapter members in increased business and leadership skills.

Social Networks: the interconnecting and interaction of an entrepreneur’s contacts, which may include family, friends, acquaintances, business partners, and customers.

Background and Need for the Study

Charles O'Reilly, professor of organizational behavior at Stanford Graduate School of Business stated: "Success in a corporation is less a function of gender discrimination than of how hard a person chooses to compete. And the folks who tend to compete the hardest are generally the stereotypical manly men" (in Tischler, 2004, ¶ 14).

O'Reilly further stated:

Women are equal to their male counterparts in education, experience and skill. But when it's a painful choice between the client crisis and the birthday party, the long road trip and the middle schooler who needs attention, the employee most likely to put company over family is the traditional, work-oriented male. (in Tischler, 2004, ¶ 16)

Women have come a long way from colonial times in America, but the way in which they think and feel about family life remains the same. New freedoms, more equal access to successful careers, and financial security have all appeared in the twenty-first century for women. How they use these features is fundamentally different from men.

Beth Johnston, a former banking executive in Chicago, stated:

People get mad if I describe women as a group, but we are relational family beings. We do not have a world that is structured to understand that, to know how to account for it, and I do not know that we ever will. (in Tischler, 2004, ¶ 19)

Women professors echo this type of thinking. Bonnie Jones, the Associate Dean for Admissions and Educational Research at the Northeastern Ohio Universities College, is one of the authors in *Cracking the Wall, Women in Higher Education Administration*, edited by Dr. Patricia Mitchell (1993). In her article, *Redesigning the Ivory Tower: Opening the Drawbridge to Women with Multiple Roles*, she addressed the double standard concerning family obligations for women and men in higher education. She asserted:

Women who have multiple roles can be viewed in two ways by higher education. They can be seen as potential risks as administrative candidates because they have too much of a personal life. On the other hand, they can be seen as having rich life experiences with tolerance and understanding of people who work for them. It is easy to add a few words to a job ad; it takes far more effort for colleges and universities to develop the type of environment conducive to the development of women in leadership roles. (Mitchell, 1993, p. 54)

From these two perspectives, the traditional work environment is not conducive for placement and longevity in administrative positions. What many women leaders propose is a change to a more balanced way of conducting business that incorporates the inherent drives of women. To substantiate this view, researchers Buttner and Moore (1997) studied a select group of professional businesswomen who had left the corporate world to begin their own ventures. This study was unique, in that it was one of the first studies investigating a model of women entrepreneurs using women alone as the target population. One of the significant findings from this study showed “that the entrepreneurs rated the desires for challenge and self-determination as most influential on their decisions, followed by concern about managing family and work and frustrations about blocks to career advancement including discrimination” (Buttner & Moore, p. 35).

Since World War II, women have entered the job market in increasing numbers. Researcher Howard Hayghe (1997) found that “The increase in the proportion of working women who are working or looking for work that began after World War II has been one of the most significant social and economic trends in modern U.S. history” (Hayghe, p. 1). Educational opportunities have increased for women to such an extent that they are now as trained and skilled as men, who have always had these opportunities afforded them in the traditional corporate world. Women in business have come to an impasse: Either stay in corporate job placements and change the traditional structure, or create a business tailored to the priorities women have in their multiple roles. In this light, it is

important to clarify the definitions that may apply to women entrepreneurs, the documentation of the growing percentage of women entrepreneurs in the twenty-first century that fit this definition, and the lack of studies that exhibit the growing need for developing organizations that represent women entrepreneurs and their leadership qualities.

The earliest reference to the word *entrepreneur* comes from the 1437 French Dictionary, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Francaise*. The meaning is framed in the phrase “celui qui entreprend quelque chose,” which means a person who is active and achieves something (Landstrom, 2005, p. 8). This phrase related to persons prone to taking risks involved in mercenary activities or in seeking one’s fortune. Later the term *entrepreneur* was used to describe persons involved with trade or services that involved risk in achieving a profit or sustaining a loss as in building projects and equipment supplies.

By the eighteenth century, the concept of the entrepreneur was found in *A Dictionary of the English Language*, described as an “adventurer, he that seeks occasion of hazard; he that puts himself in the hand of chance” (Landstrom, 2005, p. 9). Both of these early definitions speak to an individual who is highly motivated to seek achievement in a venture of their own making. In line with this idea, ventures usually denote an economic impact for the entrepreneur and the society in which they function. However, it is necessary here to differentiate between the role of the entrepreneur and what is commonly described as the small business owner when speaking of ventures and economic impact. The current definition of the entrepreneur is best described not only by what it is, but also by what it is not. Carland, Hoy, and Carland (1984) developed a distinction between these two terms:

An entrepreneur is an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purposes of profit and growth. The entrepreneur is characterized principally by innovative behavior and will employ strategic management practices in the business.

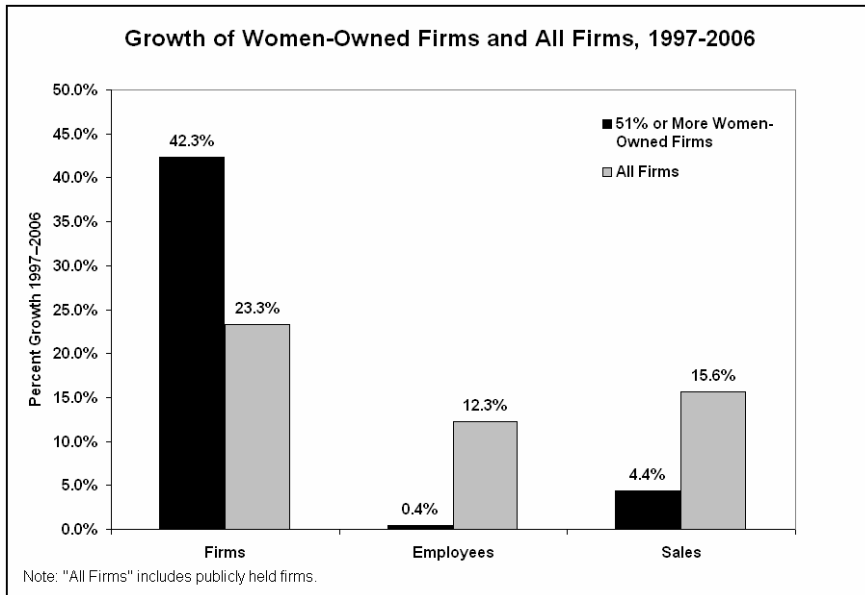
A small business owner is an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of furthering personal goals. The business must be the primary sources of income and will consume the majority of one's time and resources. The owner perceives the business as an extension of his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

In this contrast of entrepreneur and small business owner, the subtle difference of innovative drive for growth and profit versus furthering personal goals is evidenced by a positive economic impact by the entrepreneur. Research from the Center for Women's Business Research (2006a, 2006b) substantiated this, showing women-owned businesses have doubled in growth within the last two decades.

From 2005 to the present, the growing numbers of women entrepreneurs has experienced a steady increase in small business formation. Further investigation by the Center for Women's Business Research (2006a, 2006b) revealed women-owned businesses are reaching a majority of over 51% in 2006, as seen in the following Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1

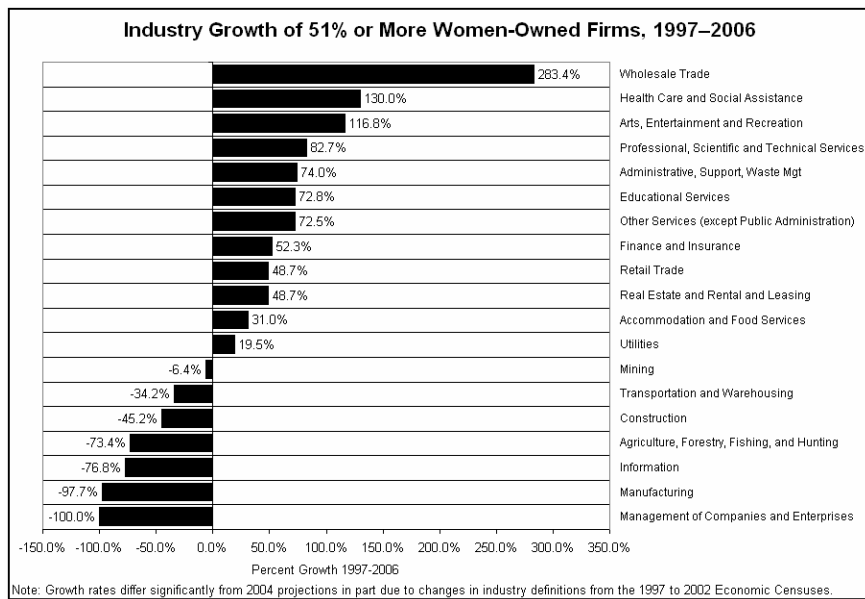
Growth of Women-Owned Firms and All Firms, 1997-2006



(Center for Women's Business Research, 2003, 2006a)

Figure 2

Industry Growth of 51% or More Women-Owned Firms, 1997-2006



(Center for Women's Business Research, 2003, 2006b)

The focus on women entrepreneurs has increased as the economic landscape has changed with women-owned businesses positive impact on the labor market. Several studies about women entrepreneurs have explored their reasons for starting their own business, while other studies explore the contrast between women and men's entrepreneurial styles. Still other studies addressed the characteristics of women entrepreneurs as a description of the type of leadership style women exhibit that differs from the leadership men exhibit. Additional studies dealt with the history of entrepreneurship, which included the emergence of women entrepreneurs and their contribution to business. However, there are few studies that described networking entrepreneurial advisory organizations for businesswomen who are founders of their own companies, as is the *Ladies Who Launch* organization (www.ladieswholaunch.com).

The Center for Women's Business Research (2007) listed 75 studies ranging in time from 1994 to 2006, funded by large corporations such as Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, Wells Fargo Bank, and AT&T. Of these 75 studies, only one addressed a connection with a women's group. *Launching Women-Owned Businesses: A Longitudinal Study of Women's Business Clients* was underwritten by the AT&T Corporation, American Express, and the National Women's Business Council. This multi-year study followed women business owners who had previously been clients of the Women's Business Centers. The relationship between this group and the successful skill development of independent women-owned businesses was explored. The women were no longer clients of this group, but had gained successful training in business strategies that made it possible to become an independent business owner (Center for Women's Business, 2007).

Catalyst, a nationally known research organization for the advancement of professional women in business since 1962, has conducted several studies on women and men in the corporate arena. Of 78 studies and 6 benchmarking reports listed on their research Web site, none of these deal with entrepreneurial peer advisory organizations as a subject of study.

In a journal article summarizing five decades of entrepreneurial studies, Dr. Donald Kuratko (2006), professor of entrepreneurship at Indiana University-Bloomington, identified current themes in Entrepreneurial Research. Of the 10 themes listed, only one theme, “corporate entrepreneurship and the need for entrepreneurial culture” (p. 485), addressed the organizational aspect of entrepreneurs. This area has been identified as an emerging area for research.

Organizations formed to support and train women entrepreneurs as they enter and develop businesses, did not exist in any significant form in the twentieth century. Only in the twenty-first century has the corporate world seen the rapid development of these kinds of organizations, due to the continuing exit of women professionals from the existing corporate field. Hence, the lack of studies that documents this recent development and the opportunity that is provided lies in the present and future.

Theoretical Framework

The following discussion provides the theoretical rationale for providing a relationship between the motivations and success of women entrepreneurs. This rationale explains the incentives of women entrepreneurs in joining the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, to further their business growth and profits.

Achievement Motivation Theory

The theory of Achievement Motivation was first introduced by McClelland, (1951) in his text titled *Personality*. The purpose of this book was to contribute to the field of psychology in the behavioral sciences, especially in relation to the motivations and need for achievement found in the human personality. McClelland sought to measure a person's need for achievement through a symbolic process using imaginative stories with subjects, gaining access to their subconscious motivations. He described this as:

Symbolic processes provide a kind of behavioral shorthand ... which is both economical and efficient in representing a lot of a person's behavior. For the same reasons it can provide a useful index of the strength of motivation on the general assumption that the greater a person's imaginative or symbolic concern with a particular goal (Food, Achievement), the stronger his motivation in that area. (McClelland, 1951, p. 481)

The subject's written responses to imaginative story pictures suggesting the influence of achievement produced characteristics that could then be scored as an achievement need of the individual. McClelland (1951) said: "With such a score it is possible to divide people into groups with high and low motivation and to observe in what ways they act differently" (p. 481). These picture stories were later organized into the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), which was administered to different groups of people in varied stages of their career development.

In a review of studies done using the TAT with groups of men and women, McClelland, Atkinson, Clark and Lowell (1953/1976) found that:

Women have achievement drives which are tied up with getting along successfully with other people, whereas men have achievement drives associated with "getting ahead" (i.e., getting a good job, being cleverer than other men, leading others, and so on). Thus in the case of men, the achievement motive seems to be tied to the life cycle, but there seems less reason to assume that it should be in the case of women. (p. 331)

Describing the need for achievement in both men and women had further

implications in regard to the impact this motive has on the economy. This aspect of the theory of achievement motivation was discussed in a successive work by McClelland (1961) in *The Achieving Society*. Here, McClelland proposed that, “achievement motivation is in part responsible for economic growth” (p. 36). This assertion was partly based on evidence gained through studies of college freshmen in both America and Germany. The high need for achievement showed a predisposition toward careers in business for both groups, and McClelland questioned that this inclination may lie in the role of entrepreneurs. This was later substantiated as McClelland (1961) studied various groups of entrepreneurs in America and Europe. He sought to define characteristics of the entrepreneur and verify the high level of achievement in entrepreneurs with these characteristics. Entrepreneurs would exhibit “moderate risk-taking, energetic activity, individual responsibility, knowledge of results of decisions, anticipation of future possibilities and organizational skills” (McClelland, p. 207). The findings from this research were:

That high need (n) for achievement leads people to behave in most of the ways they should behave if they are to fulfill the entrepreneurial role successfully as it has been defined by economists, historians and sociologists. The achievement motive should lead individuals to seek out situations which provide moderate challenge to their skills, to perform better in such situations, and to have greater confidence in the likelihood of their success. It should make them conservative where things are completely beyond their control...and happier where they have some opportunity of influencing the outcome of a series of events by their own actions and knowing concretely what those actions have accomplished. (McClelland, 1961, p. 238)

The theory of Achievement Motivation described the strong need for achievement, the intrinsic desire for independence, and the economic drive for profits as elements found in entrepreneurs. How these individual attributes found in women move them toward entrepreneurship and increased economic benefit through a peer advisory

network is an important aspect for further research.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the focus of this study concerning women entrepreneurs and their membership in the *Ladies Who Launch* organization.

1. What motivational factors of the members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, led each to begin an entrepreneurial venture in business?
2. What benefits does the *Ladies Who Launch* organization offer their members that serve to strengthen their personal, business and leadership skills?

Limitations

The researcher recognized the focus of this research as a limitation of the study. There are numerous organizations representing women entrepreneurs, with a smaller subgroup of specific networking and peer advisory organizations. Of this subgroup, only one organization, The *Ladies Who Launch* organization was the subject of this case study. This study did not attempt to describe or compare any other existing networking peer advisory organization with the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. In addition, this case study reviewed a smaller sampling of Ladies Who Launch organizational members that resided in the Northern California Region of the United States. This limited the generalization to the entire organization, which has chapters throughout the United States.

The researcher focused efforts on studying the nature of women entrepreneurs as it related to their membership in the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. An additional focus on the structure of the organization itself as it related to the development of leadership skills in the members it serves, provided insights to the benefits of women

advisory and network organizations.

A representative sample of eight chapter members and one Regional Director, representing the United States was a limitation to this study. The collection of documents was important to describe the mission statement, the types of activities, and the networking advisory communications to members of this organization. However, documents made available from the *Ladies Who Launch* organization was limited, since the researcher was not a member of this organization. The researcher's background and lack of affiliation with businesswomen's organizations did not affect the description of this study however, due to the organization's openness in providing information and opportunities to observe planned events within the San Francisco Bay Area.

Significance of the Study

This study provided the findings of the motivations to begin an entrepreneurial venture and the benefits afforded by the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, to a small group of members. This study had significance in three major areas: (a) the body of empirical knowledge on women entrepreneurs and the organizations they join, (b) the impact the *Ladies Who Launch* organization has on members to begin and sustain an entrepreneurial venture, and (c) the leadership skills members gain through association with this organization.

Although this was a representative sample of women entrepreneurs who were members of one organization—the *Ladies Who Launch*—the findings indicated that all of the participants held similar motivations for entrepreneurship. A majority of the participants felt that association with this organization provided the benefits of networking, advice, and leadership opportunities that positively impacted their individual

businesses.

Findings, in the area of benefits gained from membership in the *Ladies Who Launch*, indicated that a majority of the participants valued the participation within a series of incubator meetings that provided information, guidance, and support for novice women entrepreneurs to “launch” their own business. Additional findings indicated that the networking aspect of the organization assisted a majority of the members with sustaining their new venture and promoting their business success. Findings indicated that more experienced women entrepreneurs benefited to a lesser degree from the incubator series and the networking level provided by the *Ladies Who Launch* organization.

This study sought to ascertain the leadership skills women entrepreneurs gained through the association with the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. The findings indicated that a majority of the participants gained leadership skills primarily through the process of beginning and sustaining their individual ventures. Association with the *Ladies Who Launch* provided additional leadership opportunities within the organizational events, which did impact a majority of the participants in developing their own leadership skills. Findings indicated that more experienced women entrepreneurs did not gain additional leadership skills through the association with the *Ladies Who Launch*; primarily due to the emphasis they placed on the networking aspect of this organization.

This study is important to the emerging body of knowledge linking women entrepreneurs with organizations that promote and support entrepreneurship. As women leave the corporate arena to begin an entrepreneurial venture, they are seeking organizations that provide support and business advice that provide a stable transition

from one to the other. Professional, experienced businesswomen are continuing to exit the corporate arena to begin a career in entrepreneurship. These women are high achievers that have experienced frustration in a traditional business setting, and have sought a venue that allows them to fulfill their desires for independence and profitability. They exhibit the characteristics that define the entrepreneur, and use the attributes of risk-taking, activity, responsibility, and business skills to start successful ventures. Many of these women have joined peer advisory organizations that provide support in networks and leadership that serve to enhance the profitability of their businesses. The factors that motivated these women into entrepreneurship and the benefits that the peer advisory organization of the *Ladies Who Launch* provided to enhance their personal, business and leadership skills has provided additional information in the field of entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A genuine invention in the realm of ideas must first emerge as an abstruse and even partial concept... At first blush a new idea appears to be very close to insanity because to be new it must reverse important basic beliefs and assumptions which, in turn, have been institutionalized and are administered by one or another kind of priesthood with a vested interest in the old idea. Arthur Miller, *The Collected Plays*, 1958. (McGovern et al., 2005, p. 571)

Introduction

This literature review is organized into four general sections: (a) the motivation and achievement descriptors of entrepreneurs, (b) the motivational factors of women entrepreneurs, (c) the networking peer advisory organizations of women entrepreneurs, and (d) the leadership skills of women entrepreneurs. The purpose of reporting the findings of the studies mentioned is to provide data on the reasons why women chose to become entrepreneurs and refine their leadership skills through networking peer advisory organizations. The literature review provided prior research on the issues of motivations, networks and leadership skills of women entrepreneurs that serves as the basis for further exploration in this field.

Motivation and Achievement Descriptors of Entrepreneurs

In a precedent-setting study, McClelland (1961) and McClelland and Winter (1969) administered the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) to a group of corporate leaders. This test consisted of 31 pictures—10 gender-specific and 21 others that can be used with adults of either sex. The subject is asked to tell a story about each picture to the examiner. The specific motives that the TAT assesses include the need for achievement, need for power, the need for intimacy, and problem-solving abilities. The results showed that executives with a high need for achievement actually promoted business growth

within a company, and gained personal economic benefits versus executives with a low need for achievement.

In addition, McClelland et al. (1953/1976) administered the TAT to a group of women college students to verify the connection of high achievement and superior learning. Their results showed that:

College females show a similar superiority... the similarity suggests that the scores for females have the same functional significance as they do for males, an hypothesis which is further supported by the moderately significant over-all difference in output between women with high and low n Achievement scores. (p.176)

There is evidence that women in executive positions exhibit a higher level of achievement (McClelland, 1955). This provides a strong platform for the movement of women professionals into the career choice of entrepreneurship. Both types of positions, corporate executive and entrepreneurial founder, involve moderate risk-taking, personal responsibility, and concrete feedback (McClelland & Winter, 1969).

Likewise, McClelland, Koestner, and Weinberger (1989) attributed implicit and self-attributed motives as measured by the TAT, as factors in associating high achievement leading to entrepreneurial activity (p. 692). Johnson (1990) reviewed 23 studies on the achievement motivation of entrepreneurs, which included the review of eight achievement measures, used in the research. Despite the differences of the measures and studies, he concluded that, “a positive relationship between achievement motivation ...and some type of entrepreneurial behavior or inclination was found in twenty of the twenty-three studies reviewed” (Johnson, p. 47). Spangler (1992) investigated the effectiveness of measures used to discern the level of achievement in individuals, such as the entrepreneur. He conducted a meta-analysis of 105 empirical research studies investigating achievement motivation, in order to ascertain the effectiveness of

McClelland's TAT measure in contrast to questionnaire measures. The TAT measure was used primarily to gauge the unconscious or implicit need for achievement in individuals that may predict economic success found in entrepreneurial activity. The findings of this study indicated that the TAT measure predicted motivation outcomes significantly better than the questionnaire measures. This substantiates the link between achievement motivation, as measured by the TAT and entrepreneurial inclinations in individuals.

A previously mentioned study by Buttner and Moore (1997) involved finding the motivational reasons of professional women in starting an entrepreneurial venture, after leaving the corporate work place. Reasons for leaving were described as "push" factors such as job dissatisfaction, or "pull" factors such as economic opportunity (p. 34).

The target population for this study was 129 women executives that had moved out of the corporate field to entrepreneurship. A questionnaire was used to find the motivational factors involved in the women's decisions to leave these organizations. The findings of this study indicated that the strongest reasons for entrepreneurship were the "pull" factors of the need for challenge and the increased desire for profits as indicated in McClelland's (1961) description of the entrepreneur.

Researchers Shane, Locke, and Collins (2003) reviewed prior work done in the field of entrepreneurial theory and process to substantiate the major motivations that influence individuals toward entrepreneurship. The authors of this research looked at motivational differences among entrepreneurs within the controlled context of "external environment, market forces and resources" (p. 260). Their conclusions, based on review of the empirical research, showed that the need for achievement, internal motivation, and the desire for independence played a vital role in determining steps in the entrepreneurial

process. Further, they “suggest that some or all the motivations influence the transition of individuals from one stage of the entrepreneurial process to another” (Shane et al., 2003, p. 275).

Motivational Factors of Women Entrepreneurs

The characteristics of women entrepreneurs have been studied extensively in an attempt to explain the reasons why women choose entrepreneurship. This aspect, although important, is only a part of the whole composite of the motivating factors that influence women to create their own businesses. William Gartner (1989) challenged the heavy emphasis on the traits of the entrepreneur as the answer to why women choose entrepreneurship. In his article, *Who is an Entrepreneur? Is the Wrong Question*, he maintained that “the entrepreneur is not a fixed state of existence, rather entrepreneurship is a role that individuals under-take to create organizations” (Gartner, p. 64).

In a longitudinal study, Hisrich and Brush (1984) tested a model of entrepreneurial antecedents. Data was collected in three areas: individual characteristics, incubator experience, and environmental factors. Their results showed that experience, business skills, and personal factors were related to growth, but still did not explain why women are motivated toward entrepreneurship.

Pitamber (2000) conducted a study on women entrepreneur’s motivations in the residential area of Omdurman, Sudan. The focus of this study was to determine “women entrepreneur’s motivation for business and entrepreneurship linking this factor to their ability to access financing and capital for their business growth and expansion” (Pitamber, p. 2). Researchers interviewed a sampling of two different types of women entrepreneurs. One set of women was lower income-based home-workers and market

women in an area of Omdurman, Sudan. This city had once been characterized as a “shantytown,” but had experienced a moderate renovation. The second set of women was middle-class residents representing private and professional businesses from a cross-section of the city of Omdurman (Pitamber, 2000). Information was gathered through a series of interviews.

Interviews were based on McClelland and Winters (1969) Need for Achievement Theory, “in that an entrepreneur will be driven by the challenge of reaching higher stages of market equilibrium and a high need for profit maximization” (Pitamber, 2000, p. 1). This definition provides both an internal psychological trait of the entrepreneur and the outward behavior toward achieving success in a business endeavor. The findings from this study indicated that both groups of women shared common demographic data, (range of ages, number of children, married), with the exception of the formal level of schooling. The majority of both groups of women gave the same reasons for starting a business; which were “helping the family and wanting to have money for themselves” (Pitamber, p. 5). Pitamber noted that these women had developed an “increased awareness to earnings and owning the income among female entrepreneurs as important entrepreneurship implications” (p. 6). The motivational factors of helping the family and desiring money for one’s own use is a theme expressed in this particular study of entrepreneurship among women. However, this same theme is found as a basic motivator in studies of women entrepreneurs in countries around the globe.

In France, a similar study was conducted using a sample group of 25 French women entrepreneurs (Orhan & Scott, 2001). This was a qualitative research study using interviews of successful mid-management entrepreneurs from three business areas in

Paris, Lyon, and Brittany, France. Each interview was then described in terms of the “general background and the moment when the decision was made to become an entrepreneur” (Orhan & Scott, 2001, p. 5).

Categories of the data were developed with the general influence of “push and pull” factors (Buttner & Moore, 1997, p. 35) that influenced the participants of the study. A “push” factor denotes a negative influence, such as necessity or inheritance that propels a person into entrepreneurship. On the other hand, the “pull” factor denotes an opportunity or challenge to a person in their choice of entrepreneurship. The demographic information was consistent among the women (college education or managerial experience), and the “pull factors, or entrepreneurial drive factor cases, outnumbered the “individual” push factor cases” (Orhan & Scott, 2001, p. 7).

It was clear to the researchers that a significant number of these women chose to become entrepreneurs due to the desire to see if they could achieve success in a profitable venture of their own creation. The “push factors” of necessity, family assistance, and prior job dissatisfaction, did not preclude the sample group of women from becoming successful entrepreneurs. However, the focus held a lower level of achievement over motivation for choice of venture.

In the United States, a study identifying many variables, one of which was the motivation of women to become entrepreneurs, took place in the city of New York. (Morris, Miyasaki, Watters, & Coombes, 2006). A sample group of 50 female entrepreneurs was chosen from a mail survey sent to 500 women entrepreneurs in upstate New York. A questionnaire was designed to measure the factors of “motives, obstacles, female identity, goals and aspirations, needs, and business and personal descriptors”

(Morris et al., 2006, p. 23). Interestingly in this study, a significant percentage of the participants had either an entrepreneurial role model or entrepreneurial parents as an influence in choosing entrepreneurship. The major motivations for becoming an entrepreneur were listed in the findings from most important to least important.

According to the study, “the most important motives to the women were “the ability to do what I want to do, personal expression, making a living, professional flexibility and helping people.” Conversely, “getting rich, hitting the corporate glass ceiling prejudice or discrimination” were very low in the calculated data (Morris et al., 2006, p. 24). Here we see recurring motivations of challenge, creativity, drive and empathy in addressing the reasons why women may chose entrepreneurship.

Looking for a different approach to discover motivations of women entrepreneurs, a separate study compared female entrepreneurs with corporate businesswomen. Both groups were alumni from an MBA program representing a distinguished business school in the United States (DeMartino, Barbato, & Jacques, 2006). Citing the lack of studies in this area of comparison, and noting that an increasing number of women were entering entrepreneurial ventures, the researchers sought to ascertain the level of motivation between the two groups in their separate career choices.

The researchers sought to ascertain a greater achieve-motivation index for women entrepreneurs than for corporate businesswomen. A survey, based on career achievement and family orientation, was given to over 5,000 graduates of the MBA program. The 2,400 participants were similar in education, age range, training, and job opportunities. Of the large number of participants, a subgroup of 97 female entrepreneurs and 177 corporate businesswomen was established. The findings of this subgroup indicated that

there was no significant difference in achievement-motivation levels between women entrepreneurs and traditional businesswomen (DeMartino et al., 2006). However, this finding was comparing women entrepreneurs with women executives in the corporate field, which would show a high correlation of achievement for both groups of women. This study helped to substantiate the idea that women entrepreneurs have high motivation to start a business and sustain its success.

Catalyst, a non-profit research and advisory organization, conducted a study in 1997, in partnership with the Committee of 200 and the National Foundation for Women Business Owners. The research focused on women's motivations for choosing entrepreneurship. This was quite a large undertaking that involved two different populations of men and women business owners and entrepreneurs. Data gathered from interviews were desegregated into the themes of personal characteristics and professional characteristics (Davidson & Burke, 2000). The findings of this study showed that the majority of both men and women business owners and entrepreneurs were highly educated, and both had similar demographic backgrounds. Interestingly, it was the women who had prior business experience—up to five years—that comprised the largest group moving into entrepreneurship. The most significant reasons women gave for starting their own business was the “result of a family situation, such as the death of a spouse or other family member ... or ‘to be my own boss’” (Davidson & Burke, 2000, p. 59). Although these reasons accrued the largest percentages in the data collected, another consideration in motivation was noted:

The largest share of women ... could be described as having evolved into entrepreneurs, people who had an idea for a service or product that they believed they could develop on their own: 44 per cent of the women in our sample fell into this category. (Davidson & Burke, 2000, p. 60)

In his book, *Entrepreneurial Intensity*, Michael H. Morris (1998) described specific “triggering events” as major motivational factors for both men and women moving into entrepreneurship. The list involves both negative and positive “Entrepreneurial Triggers as: Survival, Job dissatisfaction, Lay-off or retrenchment, Business in trouble, Divorce, Death, Fresh start, Opportunity knocks, Curiosity, Desire to improve one’s lot, Now or never, Windfall and Deliberate Search” (Morris, 1998, p. 84). He noted that these “triggers” describe the “major factors that ultimately cause an individual to “go for it” at a particular point in time ... and that they are the result of circumstances or developments in the environment” (Morris, p. 84). Both the negative and positive aspects of the “triggers” may be viewed as descriptors in what is called the “push” and “pull” factors (Buttner & Moore, 1997). “One is pushed into entrepreneurship by unemployment or job dissatisfaction. One is pulled by the perception of market opportunities ...” (Morris, p. 84). These studies imply that events along with prior experience in business and a creative drive help to define the motivational factors of women entrepreneurs.

Another study was conducted in Britain, using a large sample of both men and women who were self-employed (Burke, Fitzroy, & Nolan, 2002). This sample was identified by the researchers, using the National Child Development Study Data (NCDS). The goal of this study was to identify entrepreneurial ability and access to finance as a capability of the self-employed individual. The attribute of motivation in regard to affecting performance in the entrepreneur was based upon McClelland et al.’s (1953/1976) theory of Achievement-Motivation. Data collection was based on a series of surveys taken beginning in 1958 to 1991 from the NCDS, and used by the researchers for

this study. The summary of the findings indicated that the “desire to be one’s own boss” was significant for both women and men entrepreneurs (Burke et al., 2002, p. 60).

However, this desire did not translate positively for women business owners in increased profits, as it seemingly did for the men business owners. This was attributed to family commitments that preclude workforce commitments, in the case of the women, not the men.

A recent study of entrepreneurs in South Africa was conducted with both men and women entrepreneurs (Mitchell, 2004). In this study, a questionnaire canvassing demographic information along with an instrument to measure entrepreneurial motivation and interviews were used to gather data from 85 women and 100 men entrepreneurs. This group was randomly selected from a total of 690 entrepreneurs listed as receiving support from a non-governmental organization benefiting entrepreneur ventures. The findings were significant in regard to women entrepreneurs. The women represented the largest rural demographic location and the largest “push” factor of a divorced or deceased spouse, which had motivated them into entrepreneurship. A majority of male entrepreneurs had significant prior business experience, leaving jobs to start their own venture. The majority of women entrepreneurs suffered from prior unemployment, leading the researchers to believe that employee opportunities for women were scarce. There were no significant differences between male and female entrepreneurs on the motivation scale. Both groups scored high in motivation to found a successful business that would meet the financial needs of their families, provide continued learning, and allow for independence.

Networking Advisory Organizations of Women Entrepreneurs

Webster's Dictionary defined a *network* as an "interconnected or interrelated group or system" (Woolf, 1981, p. 765). *Peer*, is defined as "belonging to the same group in society" (Woolf, p. 838). *Advisory* is defined as "having or exercising the power to advise" (p. 18). *Organization* is defined as an "association or society" (Woolf, p. 802), and *women entrepreneurs* defined as "adult female persons who assume the risks of a business or enterprise" (Woolf, p. 378). Although this was broken down into segments, putting it back together forms congruity in describing the type of organizations that women entrepreneurs are forming and joining.

These organizations attract women business owners from small start-ups to lucrative established businesses. Women entrepreneurs are motivated to join these organizations for the benefit that they offer in the personal and professional realms of business. The literature that accurately describes this growing trend is not comprehensive. Many of these types of organizations did not formally exist ten years ago. Informal networks, as in "The Old Boys Club," have existed for decades in traditional business circles, but these did not reflect the type of connecting and support that women sought both in the corporate and private sectors.

The entrepreneur, by the very nature of starting a new business venture, must be involved in a social context that involves making connections to access resources and social networks. Authors Howard Aldrich and Catherine Zimmer (1986) first explored this concept in an article titled *Entrepreneurship through Social Networks*. Emphasis was on the role of networks in helping to form business opportunities for entrepreneurs. The article addressed four applications pertaining to the function of networks:

1. Social forces that increase density of networks, i.e. extensiveness of ties between individuals.
2. Brokers who promote access in social networks, such as trade associations, technical experts, management consultants who facilitate the interests of individuals not directly connected to one another.
3. The diversity of the network that increases the productivity of the entrepreneur
4. Social resources embedded in the entrepreneurs' network. This involves weak ties to people who are well placed, as well as to people with different kinds of resources. (Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986, pp. 3-24)

A subsequent study, by Aldrich and Sakano (1998), looked at the differences in the type of networks formed by men and women and how each gender utilized them. The researchers surveyed “personal networks of small and medium-sized businesses in five countries: Japan, the United States, Italy, Northern Ireland and Sweden” (p. 33), taking three years, from 1986-1989, to finish. Their findings were thought-provoking:

Women were not major figures in the personal networks of owners in any nation... Women owners had more women in their networks ... compared to men. The low percentage of women in owners' networks undoubtedly reflects the existing distribution of economic resources and power in these nations... Women are not found at the head of major corporations, nor are the key players in the financial services sector, where they might be able to forge strong ties with small and medium-sized business owners. (Aldrich & Sakano, 1998, p. 38)

This study took place less than 20 years ago, and this quote could still apply in regard to the difficulties women face in the corporate frameworks within nations. However, the use of networks has been a source of financial independence and success for women in entrepreneurship and has become a platform for formal network organizations.

Aldrich, Elam, and Reese (1997) explored this dynamic further in the light of legal and financial activities that men and women entrepreneurs utilized through their networks. The focus of this study was to ascertain the ways in which women used their networks to gain business support and capital. Networks were described as “strong tie

relationships of long duration and frequent contact, weak tie relationships of shorter duration and contact, and fleeting contacts with strangers” (Aldrich et al., 1997, p. 4). Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used in a two Phase study, canvassing 157 men and 60 women entrepreneurs from the “Research Triangle Area of North Carolina” (Aldrich et al., p. 7).

Findings from this study indicated that both women and men were active in their networks, used familiar channels of friends and business contacts for assistance, and utilized prior contacts in business to gain further business. The researchers noted that although there was sex bias in the composition of the networks, women did not differ from men in how they used them. It was noted that the inclinations of both groups was to seek advice and financial assistance from their same gender initially, before seeking other avenues from each other (Aldrich et al., 1997).

Networking opportunities and support may even be a cause for women to choose entrepreneurship (Allen, 2000). In a study involving 595 male and female entrepreneurs, the findings indicated that women benefited more than men did in networks that included women with prior business experience, even though the venture may have failed. Women associating in entrepreneurial networks were influenced by other businesswomen to begin their own venture. Allen suggested that “an important part of entrepreneurial assistance for women may involve facilitating direct and quality interaction with other female entrepreneur – individuals who may be more supportive ...” (p. 497). Networks were viewed as important for the consideration of forming new businesses.

Women entrepreneurs in Hong Kong, a city with a population of over six million people, were found to utilize networks most effectively (Chan & Foster, 2001). Small

business ventures, which then represented around 4.1% of the total population, were the subject of this study. A smaller sample of both men and women entrepreneurs from “the Hong Kong Owners-Managers Association (HOMA) was the target population” (Chan & Foster, 2001, p. 61). The findings indicated that, “owner/managers in these small businesses did use the knowledge and expertise of colleagues in both the creative and final evaluative phases of what we have referred to in this paper as ‘strategy formation’” (Chan & Foster, p. 65). The concept that women gain insight and advise more readily from associating with other businesswomen in networks was credited to the idea that women tend to be more people-oriented than men, as a whole.

In contrast to a large city with vast potential for entrepreneurial business ventures, a study of rural businesswomen in the Australian outback was conducted to ascertain how these women approached marketing their businesses (Mankelow & Merrilees, 2001). The format for this study was a qualitative model using nine case studies of rural women entrepreneurs of varied business backgrounds and current ventures. The findings indicate that even rural women entrepreneurs utilize informal networks for information and as a profitable means for distribution. It appeared to the researchers that the women’s use of networks was a cost-effective way of promoting business growth, and that entrepreneurial networks may be more vital for rural communities than for larger cities.

Small enterprises often seek to join a network organization to achieve business growth as reviewed in this study (Havnes & Senneseth, 2001). The researchers used panel data accrued over five years from seven countries in Europe: Austria, Belgium, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. The motive for this study was to determine the level of growth benefits to small firms based on their level of network

commitment. The findings indicated that firms that had a high level of involvement with a network of other firms exhibited higher growth than firms that had none to little involvement with networks. The researchers further surmised “that networking precedes growth in market extension” (Havenes & Senneseth, 2001, p. 298). They proposed an additional proposition that a network organization will make an attempt to attract businesses that exhibit vigor in growth potential. This dynamic would potentially increase growth potential for all ventures that join network organizations.

The idea that network organizations can attract and help promote growth potential for entrepreneur’s ventures was explored in a longitudinal study on the process of small firm networks (O’Donnell, 2004). Emphasis in this study focused on the founder of the venture and the process that was adopted to seek a network, and the level of participation within that network. Following this through, the benefits derived from participation within networks were explored. Seven small firm owners that had been in business for a minimum of five years were the sample population. In-depth interviews canvassing “the level of networking, networking proactivity, and strength of network tie” were conducted in informal field interviews (O’Donnell, p. 212).

Findings from this study indicated that these small firm owners had a high level of interaction in networks that involved the customer base. They valued building strong ties of trust with the customer for the product and service. Networks with business colleagues were proactive, in that there was planning involved in order to gain advice and information for business growth (O’Donnell, 2004). These forms of networks are small and function in isolation. However, it is important to explore the collective idea of an organizational network, comprised of several founders for the purposes of increasing the

power for support, information, and advice that is crucial to the entrepreneur and business growth.

In recent years, this type of model network, especially for women entrepreneurs, has been appearing in the business world of the twenty-first century. It is a model network that involves women who are, or would like to be, entrepreneurs. This collective provides information, advice, support, and training to experienced and inexperienced businesswomen. It relies upon the collective experience, wisdom and creativity that is present in each member of the network organization. The potential for business growth and impact is much greater through an organized network organization of peer businesswomen entrepreneurs. An integral and effective part of these organizations is the “incubator phase” that these advisory peer networks provide their new members.

According to the National Business Incubation Association (2002) in the United States:

Business incubation is a business support process that accelerates the successful development of start-up and fledgling companies by providing entrepreneurs with an array of targeted resources and services. These services are usually developed or orchestrated by incubator management and offered both in the business incubator and through the network of contacts. (¶ 1)

In network organizations, especially in regard to women entrepreneurs, this process is the first step in launching a business. A study in regard to the way business incubators may operate was conducted in Finland (Totterman & Sten, 2005). Three business incubators outside of the high economic growth regions of Finland were selected, with each incubator representing a different process in incubating new ventures. Interviews were conducted with incubator managers, incubator clients and entrepreneur incubator graduates. The goal of this study was to determine the ways in which business incubators help entrepreneurs to achieve personal networks and business success. The

findings indicated that each business incubator did facilitate networking activities within the incubator, as in the case of collaboration with entrepreneur graduates, and provided education seminars for both clients and graduates. However, there was little contact between these three incubator groups, which would have provided additional resources, opportunities, and information for the incubator clients. In general, the research for this study pointed to business incubators as most effective in the early stages of entrepreneurial business venturing.

A newer form of the business incubator was the subject for a study conducted in Denmark (Bollingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005). This type of incubator was described as a “hybrid” incubator, in that the emphasis was on growth and diversification instead of launching and local economic development. One incubator organization, acting as an umbrella network for several entrepreneurial ventures, was the subject of this case study. All of the incubator ventures were individual enterprises networked within this organization, at one building. This networking organization grew from 16 entrepreneurial businesses to 50 companies over a time span of three years. As small ventures exhibit growth, they may choose to leave the organization’s building, but remain within the network. Other new ventures are encouraged to incubate within the organization, and as start-ups, remain at the building, renting space and collaborating with the other ventures within the organization. Certain tenets were decided upon by the two principle founders of this networking co-operative:

1. Sharing knowledge and opportunities must be considered important. They should be colleagues rather than competitors;
2. Tenant should not just share the same building but should also want to spend time together in a social way;
3. Interesting competencies, visions, and products, and a desire for joint development should be given priority;

4. Both experienced and new companies would be invited. (Bollingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005, p. 278)

This type of agenda is now becoming a model for networking peer advisory organizations within the United States, especially in regard to women entrepreneurs. This Denmark study addressed the reasons for the emergence of this newer form of the business incubator, and to determine the benefits of this model in comparison to the traditional model. The findings indicated that this “hybrid” incubator was managed by the smaller firms that comprised the network, instead of the traditional top management style. Primarily due to this management style, the owners of the small firms sought collaboration with the other ventures within the building. The smaller size of the networking organization facilitated social interactions between the small business-owners, which served to enhance the networking capabilities of the organization.

The newer model of the business incubator, as described in the previous study, sets the stage for the networking peer advisory organizations that have been forming at a rapid rate within the United States. Women entrepreneurs are looking toward this model as a vehicle to gaining resources and support for successful business ventures. However, the approach to networking has been a concern to many novice women entrepreneurs. The lack of professional experience to develop social networking has remained a factor (Aldrich, 1997). Hence, this study provided insight to what may be the base for the rapid development of women network organizations within the last ten years. Bollingtoft and Ulhøi (2005) stated: “By institutionalizing networking, incubates may achieve some benefits inasmuch as networking no longer depends on the personal capital or connections of a few people” (p. 275).

A recent study reviewed the differences of men and women entrepreneurs in their

approach to networking and business growth (Manolova, Carter, Manev, & Gyoshev, 2007). The researchers proposed that women's ventures are started through the lens of "cooperative networks of relationships" in which business relationships are integrated rather than separated from family, societal, and personal factors" (Manolova et al., p. 412). The study centered on men and women entrepreneurs in the transitional economy of Bulgaria. A questionnaire was used as the survey instrument for 39 women and men entrepreneurs in Bulgaria. The findings indicated that networks, especially the advice garnered through these contacts, were definitely beneficial for venture growth for both genders. In regard to the way in which women entrepreneurs approach networking, the findings were significant, showing that "women have different socialization experiences, social networks, and growth objectives, and to a large extent, parallel the experiences of women entrepreneurs in developed market economies" (Manolova et al., p. 420).

These studies underscore the need to look closer at organizations formed by women entrepreneurs as a visual statement that businesswomen use networking with a different emphasis, which does not preclude business success. The way in which women approach a business endeavor may be gender-specific, but the economic drive and results are the same as those of men entrepreneurs. In fact, economic growth in many parts of the globe has been attributed to the increase and impact of women entrepreneurs. The significance of networks to increase business growth is important for both men and women entrepreneurs. How each gender utilizes networks is interesting and a topic for studies, but the results of this network use is positive economic growth for both genders.

Leadership Skills of Women Entrepreneurs

Leadership does not come with a simple definition, but rather with a long list of

what leadership may encompass. According to Bass (1974/1990):

Leadership has been conceived as the focus of group processes, as a matter of personality, as a matter of inducing compliance, as the exercise of influence, as particular behaviors, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument to achieve goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, as initiation of structure, and as many combinations of these definitions. (p. 38)

Keeping this list in mind, it is equally difficult to pinpoint all of the styles or skills that a leader may possess, especially one who is the sole founder of a business, as is the entrepreneur. Stogdill (1948), in his analysis of leadership factors, summarized his view stating:

The findings suggest that leadership is not a matter of passive status, or of the mere possession of some combination of traits. It appears rather to be a working relationship among members of a group, in which the leader acquires status through active participation and demonstration of his capacity for carrying cooperative tasks through to completion. Significant aspects of this capacity for organizing and expediting cooperative effort appear to be intelligence, alertness to the needs and motives of others, and insight into situations, further reinforced by such habits as responsibility, initiative, persistence, and self-confidence. (p. 132)

Authors Bernard Bass and Ralph Stogdill (1990) collaborated to produce the cornerstone of early work in the area of leadership. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) maintained that specific qualities of the leader were observable and helped to clarify the aspects of a leader. In an article on leadership traits, seven aspects were listed as strong predictors of an effective leader: “Drive, Leadership Motivation, Honesty and Integrity, Self-confidence, Cognitive ability, Knowledge of Business, and Other traits (weaker support): charisma, creativity/originality, flexibility” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, p. 135). Concurring with the work done by McClelland in Achievement-Motivation, these authors outlined a basic quality of entrepreneurs as: “The need for achievement is an important motive among effective leaders and even more important among successful entrepreneurs” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, p. 135).

The issue of leader stereotypes and gender differences between men and women's management skills has been a subject of intense research for the last two decades.

Women entrepreneurs, as leaders of their own companies, play a part in this research, but the primary goal of this review is to describe the actual skills that these women exhibit as leaders. Stereotypical descriptions and gender differences may be reasons for women to use their leadership skills in an entrepreneurial venture.

Catalyst (1998) explained why this may be the case in their book, *Advancing Women in Business – The Catalyst Guide, Best Practices from the Corporate Leaders*.

Advancing women in leadership positions and keeping them there is difficult at best. The Catalyst (1998) authors stated:

Advancing women into top positions of leadership is no small task; it involves a challenge to the way business has been done over the past decades. If CEOs and other top executives of America's corporations – overwhelmingly men – understand the facts and the potential benefits of gender equity, they will see to it that what needs to be done is done. It seems clear, however, that grassroots or unsupported efforts to advance women cannot survive in the long term on their own. (p. 7)

As evidenced in the following research, advancement in power and position are not necessarily tied to the evidence of leadership ability. This will appear to be a recurring dilemma that is still in place in the corporate workplace.

A study to determine how male and female managers are viewed in their mastery of specific leadership skills was conducted using skill clusters from McClelland's work on motivational theory (Baack, Carr-Ruffino, & Pelletier, 1994). This early work helped to determine the common skills shared by both genders, and identify any particularly strong qualities that may pertain to one gender over the other. A questionnaire was given to both men and women managers to determine which skills they identified as viable for a top management position. Findings indicated that both genders agreed on 10 skills that

would be required for top management, half of which dealt with improving customer satisfaction. An additional finding indicated that women managers were significantly strong in the skills of determining customer needs, follow-up with the customer and flexibility in adapting to changing needs of the customer. These skills translated into underlying perceptions that “women show concern and care for others; they listen carefully to others; they tune in to what others need and want; they are flexible and responsive in meeting others’ needs; and they are skilled at supporting and nurturing others” (Baack et al., 1994, p. 21). Since most businesses deal with a customer base, the researchers identified these as key strengths needed in top management positions, which would enhance women’s promotability in business.

An additional study addressed the assessed self-view of leadership skills in male and female managers in Hong Kong (Chow, 2005). Taking stereotypical attributes and gender differences into account, especially in the Asian context, the researchers sought agreement on identified skills attributed to effective leadership models. However, there was no significant difference in skill identification of the male and female managers. Both genders agreed upon the qualities of “inspiring, performance orientation, decisive, visionary, integrity, administrative competent, diplomatic, collaborative, self-sacrificial and modesty” (Chow, 2005, p. 227). Although this was a positive sign for women managers, but it may not be enough to retain them in the corporate field, as more women are leaving to create economic structures of their own.

As already noted, networks are vital for business growth, especially for women entrepreneurs. Many of these networks may be in place for businesswomen in the corporate arena prior to moving into entrepreneurship. A study involving men and

women managers, and the importance of networks in their development and use was undertaken in Denmark (Waldstrom, & Madsen, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to ascertain how women managers viewed their nearest colleague for networking opportunities. The study sought to determine if women managers developed networks more with other women managers as a strategy for success in their employment. Both male and female managers were involved in a survey, and contrasted.

Findings indicated that women managers viewed their colleagues as friends before the age of 40 but less so after the age of 50, but men managers viewed colleagues as competition before the age of 40 and more as friends after the age of 50. There were no gender differences in how women and men managers viewed their social networks in place at work, leading the researchers to surmise that “female managers’ homophilious preference for networks with other female managers could lead to more interdepartmental relations if there are few other women in the department” (Waldstrom, & Madsen, 2005, p. 144). These findings show that women leaders, whether corporate or private, establish networks due to the information, opportunities, and support afforded through these contacts. Because women may indeed be people-oriented, these networks provided an opportunity for leadership skills.

Can formal networking organizations actually increase women’s participation in leadership roles? This question was posed in a case study on a specific women’s organization in Brisbane, Australia (Pini, Brown, & Ryan, 2004). Increased participation in leadership roles requires entry-level leadership qualities which are then refined in the position itself.

The researchers of this study adopted the view that formal women-only networks enabled women to achieve senior level positions in business and local government. Their view was based on the premise that the lack of effective networks for women in government was still a present barrier. This was supported by the small number of women leaders in the large state of Queensland. Out of 124 positions, only 19 were held by women, the target population of this qualitative study.

The findings fell into three categories of thought as a result of the interviews. “The majority of women leaders saw the benefit of a formal network organization “as a ready-made” network for women beginning careers in local government” (Pini et al., 2004, p. 289). This organization provided the opportunity to establish “contact with more experienced senior women in the local government sector who could provide them with guidance and support” (Pini et al., p. 289). A second group of women saw a conflict of interest in joining a formal organization for women when an established government organization existed for both genders. They viewed this departure as a negative move toward separatism—a barrier they felt had already been overcome by their presence in government positions of leadership. The third group expressed uncertainty of the power a formal women’s network could wield in issues of “voice” from women leaders in influencing decisions made at the government level.

These three avenues of thought, revealed by this study, are indicative of many women in corporate positions of management. The business frame is set, and women gain positions within the established frame. They encounter less resistance, but not the total absence of the transparent “glass ceiling.” The leadership skill many women adopt is the strategy of utilizing a formal networking organization that offers support, advice, and

additional training to compete for leadership roles in the existing corporate structure.

As stated previously, many leadership skills are refined by women moving from the corporate world into entrepreneurship. Once there, however, what leadership abilities are needed to launch a venture and promote its growth? This question is best answered by the founders themselves. One such study sought to explore the leadership skills of women entrepreneurs solely from their feminine perspective on the subject, not in comparison to styles of male entrepreneurs (Buttner, 2001). The participants for this study were women entrepreneurs who had been involved in corporate business before starting their own venture, had conducted their own business for a minimum period of one year, and were involved as the leading manager of the company. The method of interviewing these women was innovative. The researcher conducted videotaped focus group meetings with women founders across seven states in America. The results of this study indicated that women entrepreneurs exhibit leadership qualities that are largely relational in nature. The themes:

1. Persevering: The role expectations of mothering carried over to the business setting for many of the women who realized both benefits and struggles as they attempted to take responsibility for client's and employees' growth and development.
2. Mutual empowerment: That women tend to lead in a participative and democratic manner.
3. Achievement: Women entrepreneurs rated self-fulfillment their most important measure of success, followed by profits.
4. Team enhancing culture: The entrepreneurs believed that nurturing, supporting and thus empowering subordinates augmented the esprit of the team. (Buttner, 2001, p. 264)

A relational quality of leadership may be reflective of the feminine nature, and may point to different ways of doing business, according to the innate characteristics of the entrepreneur. Research in this area of feminine and masculine attributes and the

impact this may have upon entrepreneurial goals and management style (Watson & Newby, 2005), is emerging in the field of psychology.

A separate study in Sweden looked at the differences in how men and women entrepreneurs ran their firms in a rural area of Ragunda Kommun (Greve, & Salaff, 2003). The sample was comprised of 32 men and women in the micro enterprises of retail trade, service, or tourism. This was a qualitative study that used interviews as the instrument for the data. A finding from this study was based on gender, and reiterates the relational quality of leadership (Buttner, 2001). The authors indicated:

That female owner/operators were more articulate. They were better at describing problems common to both males and females. This ability to communicate more effectively than males on some issues is consistent with research identifying female openness and communication strengths. (Greve & Salaff, 2003, p. 28)

Leadership skill appears to be more important to women entrepreneurs in the initial phase of a venture and lack of this skill can cause failure (Winn, 2004). This study analyzed 24 women entrepreneurs with a maximum of three years experience in the venture. All of these women had prior corporate experience, but only half of this population had middle to senior management experience. The findings indicated that many of these entrepreneurial women did not understand the time commitment of a new venture, and lacked managerial training in order to move the venture to success. Other constraints of family and lack of support through networks were noted as barriers to success, a theme initially seen as pertaining only to the inflexibility of the corporate world.

The need for leadership capability is a factor in another study that focused on the problems women-owned businesses encounter (Lee & Denslow, 2005). This qualitative study encompassed a sample population of one hundred and sixty women entrepreneurs

drawn from the membership directory of the National Association of Women Business Owners (NAWBO). A majority of these women (60%) had less than three years of previous experience in business. The findings in regard to leadership ability suggest that:

Establishing credibility, delegating authority, administrative work and making the business profitable, classified into management factors, were significantly different across the growth stages (start-up, early growth, later growth, and maturity). Establishing credibility and delegating authority were positively correlated with growth stages. With regard to delegating authority, women entrepreneurs tended to be reluctant to delegate responsibility at the start up stage. (Lee & Denslow, 2005, p. 8)

Following this theme, a recent study focused on the movement of senior women managers into entrepreneurship, and their use of corporate management skills in this transition (Terjesen, 2005). This qualitative study entailed a target population of “ten women managers who recently left senior management positions in large UK corporations and established their own ventures” (Terjesen, p. 250). All of these women had a minimum of five years of corporate management experience. Each of their ventures were in the early growth stage, or under three years of existence. A majority of the women started ventures in the same industry in which they had prior experience.

The findings indicated that previous networks and identified mentors from the corporate arena enabled a smoother transition into the new venture. Additionally significant was the finding that “senior women manager’s investment in their human (knowing how) and social (knowing whom) capital while in traditional organizations can assist start-up activities” (Terjesen, 2005, p. 256). It was evident that these new entrepreneurs were not new to the leadership skills required to start a business. Prior experience in corporate management had prepared these women for a seamless transition into entrepreneurship.

An additional study in the field of psychology points to entrepreneurs as authentic

leaders (Jensen & Luthans, 2006). This study indicated that entrepreneurs' leadership skills include using the positive psychological capital of optimism, resiliency, and hope, and that these attributes in founders show increased growth in business ventures. This is an emerging field of study linking psychology with entrepreneur leadership abilities. The target population for this study was employees and founders of 62 businesses in the Midwest. A survey was sent out to the employees for their perceptions of the founder. The founder was given a separate survey that involved the demographic information of the company and their self-assessment of leadership attributes. Women founders constituted 43% of the 62 businesses (p. 658). The results of the study were:

that employees who perceived their entrepreneur/leader to be more authentic had correspondingly higher levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and work happiness. This suggests that the perceptions of authentic leadership may not only positively affect employee work attitudes and happiness, but may also at least have an indirect impact on venture performance. (Jensen & Luthans, 2006, p. 658)

Summary

In order to understand why women entrepreneurs are joining organizations that provide advisory and networking support, it is important to understand the reasons behind this phenomenon. Thus, the review of literature began with a brief overview of the motivations and high achievement that women exhibit prior to entering into entrepreneurship and in continuing through the stages of an entrepreneurial venture. Professional women executives, women with little or no prior business experience, and those in-between, show similar reasons for starting their own ventures. Some women are "pushed" into entrepreneurship by a sudden change in life, but the majority of women are "pulled" into entrepreneurship by the opportunities of autonomy and profitability. They enjoy taking the responsibility of a business, they have organizational skills, and they

have the education to problem-solve.

Women, partly due to their nature, seem to be more people-oriented and relational in the way they conduct business. This may help to explain the reasons why women seek networks of other women to gain support in conducting a private commerce. Whether these women are in the corporate field, moving into entrepreneurship or already involved in an enterprise, we see them forming social networks for advice, business contacts and increased learning to improve their businesses. Another reason for this is the still existing barrier to networks in place within the traditional corporate field. Professional women find it hard to “break in” to the business network established by men, since men tend to form networks with only other men. However, women seem to include both men and other women in the networks that they build independently of the traditional frame. This makes networking a valuable asset to the women entrepreneur, and seems to be actually drawing other women into entrepreneurship. As more women are becoming entrepreneurs, we see them forming organizations of networks that involve incubator groups that add specific support and guidance. This aspect of the network organizations provides even greater opportunities for profitability, advisory support and increased learning for leadership opportunities.

Women who are highly motivated and have prior business experience exhibit leadership skills that ensure a successful entrepreneurial venture. *Leadership*, as defined by Stogdill (1948), is a continual process of learning to work with others in a group, as in a business (p. 127). It requires skills of cooperation, flexibility, knowledge of the customer’s needs and good communication skills. Women find it easier to show concern and care for others. They seem to be able to translate what they hear from their customers

into the product that meets their needs. Women entrepreneurs are relational in their interactions with employees. They work diligently in establishing trust with their group, providing avenues of learning and value to their employees, exhibiting new skills of authentic leadership (Jensen & Luthans, 2006).

Finally, these three themes found in women entrepreneurs are intertwined in each individual woman as drive or motivation, social needs, or networking and leadership skills or opportunities. As more women are moving into entrepreneurship, they are forming organizations that utilize each of these themes to help them succeed in business. It is important to understand, not only what motivates women into entrepreneurship, but to understand the specific benefits of a networking, peer advisory organization.

A review of the literature provided certain aspects of women entrepreneurs as the topic of studies. However, there are few studies on the organizations they create or join for business support and training in leadership opportunities and skills. This research attempted to provide a focused picture of this interaction between women entrepreneurs and the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. The elements of motivation, networking and leadership skills were explored in regard to a sample group of members of this organization.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

“With equality of experience and of general faculties, a woman usually sees much more than a man of what is immediately before her.” John Stuart Mill, *Subjection of Women*, 1869 (McGovern et al., 2005, p. 570)

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explain the motivating factors of women choosing the field of entrepreneurship and joining the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. It provided an analysis of the impact this organization has on furthering the trend of entrepreneurship in women and the benefits women gained by joining this organization. This study sought to describe the positive influence the *Ladies Who Launch* organization has upon members in increasing their leadership skills in business.

Methodology

The researcher chose to use the case study methodology using qualitative research methods to study the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. In order to explain the motivational factors of women entrepreneurs and their choice to join this organization, the case study methodology provided a rich description of this organization in how it benefits its members and functions to develop leadership skills in women-owned businesses.

Design

The case study, using qualitative research methods, allowed the researcher to conduct a detailed study about the single case (Merriam, 1998). This type of qualitative research allowed for understanding from the participant’s point of view, as the focus of the study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). The uniqueness of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization is best explored and described, using qualitative methods. This organization

is a networking and peer advisory group that offers membership to women who are founders of their own companies, and to women who are starting a company. Using qualitative research methods, the researcher can gather, organize, and interpret information using visual and auditory means as filters (Lichtman, 2006). This method of research allows the participants to give meaning to the function of their organization and involves the interaction of understanding and interpretation with the researcher to accurately portray this organization in written form.

A broad range of data collection is available in qualitative research. According to Lichtman (2006), qualitative research typically involves the study of things as they exist, rather than contriving artificial situations and experiments (p. 11). The collection of informational data by means of the Internet is appropriate, as this organization provides a Web site for the communication of its members. On-site interviews of chapter members and the Director provided the researcher with a personal perspective of what is important to the participants in relation to their organization and its impact in regard to defining women leaders.

Through qualitative methodology, researchers use the data to gain insights and understanding of human interactions. It is an inductive way of thinking, rather than a deductive approach. Researchers do not begin with a hypothesis to test, as in quantitative research. Instead, qualitative research involves using the data to gain a perception and illumination of the being of an individual, group, or organization. This allows for new interpretations to arise and new avenues of research for future development. In this process, researchers should reflect about their responsibility in the inquiry that will protect against personal bias, and promote objectivity to the research. The researcher

maintains that qualitative methodology is the correct way of representing this organization, because it allows the members to articulate their motivations, experiences, goals, and concerns in their own words. It allows the researcher and the audience to engage in the workings of this organization in addition to the documents related to the description of the organization's own work.

One organization, the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, was investigated as a model case study. The case study involved narrative and phenomenological research strategies. The researcher used phenomenological research to understand the contribution to and the development of the member's leadership skills and other benefits provided within the organization.

The researcher used interviews with women who are members of the San Francisco Chapter of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, observations of the events and activities, and documents such as written records, Web sites, and photographs as sources of data. In a model case study, the researcher gathered data through participant observations, formal and informal interviews, and review of the documents. This provided for a focused interpretation from the member's perspective, of the benefits they gained from membership with this organization.

Data Collection

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher submitted an application to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS), which was approved (Appendix A). Upon approval from the IRBPHS, the researcher developed a potential list of participants to study from the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. This list of potential participants

(Appendix B) received an electronic or written initial letter of invitation to participate in the study, which contained a review of the study and its potential risks to the participant (Appendix C). Participants were asked to sign a letter of consent, stating that they agree to become a research participant (Appendix D). Once this letter was signed, the researcher scheduled interview and observation dates and sent the participants a confirmation letter of approved dates and times (Appendix E). Interviews were conducted using formal interview questions (Appendix F and G) and an IRBPHS-approved protocol (Appendix H)

Population and Sample

The population studied in this investigation was comprised of the San Francisco Regional Director and eight of the nine original chapter members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. One participant dropped out late in the study due to unexplained circumstances. The state of California was the representative state, and the nine members, including the Regional Director, as founders of their own companies were the representative sample for this nationally known organization. The *Ladies Who Launch* organization is comprised of both experienced businesswomen who have left the corporate world and women with no previous business acumen. Members of this organization are provided with networking strategies, advisory assistance, and leadership opportunities through incubator groups and on-going monthly meetings.

The researcher formally interviewed nine members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization one of whom was the Director of the San Francisco region of this organization. In addition to collecting data through formal interviews, the researcher conducted a minimum of two hours of participant observation with informal

conversations with each member within the context of their own company, and during incubator and networking events. Informal conversations were initiated with each member during field observations when appropriate. Relevant documents of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization (mission statement, newsletters, conference materials, press releases) were used in the case study. The components of interviews, observations, and document collection served to provide a rich descriptive environment for this study. The researcher documented data statements as soon as possible following field observation involving informal conversations. Observations took place at the organization's conference, meetings, events, and member's offices. Field notes were taken during these observations. Pseudonyms were assigned to all of the participants in place of the names of the members and the Director in this study.

The Director provided the objective overview of the functions, structure, and future goals for this organization from the San Francisco headquarters in California. This provided the data on the emphasis in leadership and business success the Director provided to the chapter members. An additional set of interview questions was provided to the Director to address this emphasis and overview of the *Ladies Who Launch* San Francisco chapter (see Appendix F).

Researcher's Profile

The background and experience of the researcher as an educator provided a unique and objective part in the collection of data. The researcher has been a teacher leader in public and private schools for a period of 30 years, with personal experience in launching a successful private school, as an educational entrepreneur. Most recently, the researcher has been engaged in implementing programs for Special Education teachers to

meet the needs of their students. The skills of risk-taking, research, and leadership provided the researcher a platform for investigating the themes of this case study.

The researcher attended an annual conference of the *Women Presidents' Organization*, a nationally known organization supporting women entrepreneurs. This was held in San Francisco in 2005, and was part of a class invitation issued to the Organization and Leadership Department of the University of San Francisco. In addition to this, the researcher also attended a class which involved the presentation of an entrepreneur business founder, who was also a Doctoral graduate from the Organization and Leadership Department of the University of San Francisco. The researcher also attended four sessions of an incubator meeting for women entrepreneurs, conducted by the *Ladies Who Launch* organization in 2007. From these three experiences, along with a long tenure as an educator, the researcher identified the field of education as the compliment to the entrepreneurial spirit and leadership exemplified in the business world. In this context, the researcher felt at ease in the setting where field observations took place and shared the common base of education with professional women founders.

The researcher began interviews, observations, and documentation collection once the participant consent form (Appendix C) was signed and returned. An interview and observation schedule was determined based on the geographic location, within the San Francisco Bay Area, of the participant's place of business. The Director was interviewed and observed at the San Francisco headquarters in California (Appendix G).

The interview consisted of ten questions developed to gather data on the two research questions related to the purpose of this study (Appendix F). The questions were designed to allow the participants to discuss their reasons for becoming an entrepreneur

and what leadership skills they bring to and gain from membership in the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. The interview allowed the researcher to articulate an understanding of the motivating factors, leadership skills, and accomplishments of this organization as a networking, advisory group for women entrepreneurs. The researcher developed the following questions for the interviews.

Interview Questions

Factors: Influences That Determined the Choice for Entrepreneurship

1. What person or persons had a direct influence upon your choice to become an entrepreneur?
2. What personal experience(s) in your education or family helped you to decide to become an entrepreneur?
3. What obstacle(s) have you encountered in the traditional corporate world that motivated you toward your own business venture?
4. What previous experience in business best prepared you for entrepreneurship?
5. In your opinion, which two leadership skills are most important for women to possess, in order to succeed in an entrepreneurial business?

Benefits: Advantages Gained by Membership in the Ladies Who Launch Organization

1. How has the *Ladies Who Launch* organization helped businesswomen to compete successfully in the business world?
2. What impact does networking through *Ladies Who Launch* have upon your own business?
3. How has the *Ladies Who Launch* organization affected the way you view ownership and the purpose of business for women entrepreneurs?

4. How has the *Ladies Who Launch* organization provided opportunities to gain and refine your leadership skills?

Data was collected through in-depth, open-ended interviews that were conducted in person, face-to-face. Before data was collected, the researcher followed the formal process of obtaining participants. Potential participants were sent a letter inviting them to participate in the study and a consent form. If the participant agreed, the researcher scheduled a suitable time for the interview to take place, along with appropriate times for the researcher to conduct field observations. After these dates were agreed upon by the participants and the researcher, a follow-up letter confirming the time and date was sent to all research participants (Appendix E).

The types of documents the researcher collected were conference and convention papers, pictures, event programs, speech transcripts, the mission statement and any other documents that illuminated the organization's work. Pertinent documents that pertain to the organization were collected from the Internet, the organization itself, and from events the organization sponsored. Pertinent documents were defined as the mission statement, objectives, conference agendas, papers, pictures, newsletters, and meeting minutes.

An observational protocol was used to record field observations (Appendix H). Organizational meetings, incubator sessions, monthly member's meeting, events sponsored by the organization and an annual San Francisco Conference of the *Ladies Who Launch* were considered potential field observation opportunities. Field observations included taking pictures.

The researcher conducted a minimum of two hours of field observation with each of the research participants who are members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization.

The researcher took notes and photographs during the observations if permissible. Field notes were typed. An effort was made to engage the participants in informal conversations during the field observations. If informal conversations took place during the field observations, the researcher made every effort to record notes of these conversations in a research memo in a timely manner in order to accurately reflect the information shared.

An attempt was made to conduct interviews in a quiet setting. Interviews were conducted in person and were tape-recorded. Each interview lasted for one to one and a half hours. The researcher took notes during these recordings. All notes were transcribed in English. The researcher sent interview transcripts to the participants to validate the authenticity of the interview and to allow the participants to make any corrections or add any statements that they wished to be included in the interview. The researcher made any changes the participants requested and sent each participant a final transcript for approval. Pseudonyms were used in order to protect the participant's identities.

As data was collected, it was sorted according to themes that arose from the research. Memos were written as data was collected to record any primary ideas related to analysis. Data was collected over a three- to four-month time period.

Data Analysis

The researcher attended a series of four incubator meetings at the home of the San Francisco Chapter Director. Five of the participants attended this incubator with the Director leading each session.

The researcher took notes at each of the four sessions as an objective observer, and collected the handouts given at each meeting. The remaining four participants were

former graduates of previous incubator meetings led by the same Director of the San Francisco Chapter. The Incubator meetings provided each participant with the rationale and guidelines for beginning a new venture and was an essential component of each participant's discussion of entrepreneurship. All of the nine participants were then interviewed by the researcher on a separate day and time at their homes or place of business. The interview questions were used with each participant and tape-recorded with permission. These taped interviews were transcribed and sent to each participant to be reviewed for accuracy and changes.

The researcher incorporated all changes sent back by the participants, before an analysis of the transcripts was begun. Following the incubator series, the researcher attended two monthly meetings of the graduates of the San Francisco Chapter incubations, which included the participants of the study along with several other members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. These meetings provided additional information, advice and business strategies for the members. The researcher attended three additional networking events for the *Ladies Who Launch* members, which were held throughout the San Francisco Bay area. These events provided the participants with additional business contacts. Notes were taken at each event and used for data analysis. An annual convention of the *Ladies Who Launch*, which was held in San Francisco, was the final event attended by the researcher. Notes of this convention were taken along with photographs of the event and of some of the participants, with permission. The researcher reviewed all data carefully. Themes and ideas that resulted from this review by the researcher were documented. The researcher followed with a more detailed analysis by coding the data. The coding was used to create a description of the setting or participants

as well as to establish the themes for analysis. The themes are discussed in relation to the research questions and the literature.

Data was sorted into three categories of interviews, field observation notes, and documents. As the data was collected, the researcher manually coded the data by searching for re-emergent words, phrases, responses, and general themes. The coding assisted the researcher in determining themes that arose in relation to the research questions.

The data collected from the interviews, field observations, and document collection was used to address the following research questions:

1. What motivational factors of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization members led each to begin an entrepreneurial venture in business?
2. What benefits does the *Ladies Who Launch* organization offer their members that serve to strengthen their personal, business and leadership skills?

Analysis of the data was used to form conclusions that applied to this organization. A detailed description of the member's reasons for entrepreneurship and the benefits of membership in the *Ladies Who Launch* organization provided information for this case study. Following are the findings that pertain to the participants of the San Francisco Chapter of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

“There is something both gratifying and humiliating in watching a man who has taken you for a routinely silly woman begin to take you seriously.” Dame Antonia Susan Byatt, *S till Life*, 1985 (McGovern et al., 2005, p. 178).

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and the data analysis from this study in three parts. The first part—interviews conducted with members of the *Ladies Who Launch* San Francisco Chapter—explored the demographic backgrounds, the motivational factors involved in entrepreneurial choice and the benefits afforded to entrepreneurial women in joining the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. The second part of this research involved documentation in the form of field notes of an incubator series of meetings for new members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization and other specific types of network events, and monthly meetings sponsored by this organization. The third part of this study encompassed the review of the organization’s documents pertaining to the mission statement, written policies, and advertisements for member’s businesses.

The aim of this study was to explain the motivating factors of women choosing the field of entrepreneurship and joining the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. It provided an analysis of the impact this organization has on furthering the trend of entrepreneurship in women and the benefits women gained by joining this organization. This study described the positive influence the *Ladies Who Launch* organization has upon members in increasing their leadership skills in business.

Site Description

An incubator series of meetings held at the San Francisco Director’s home, several informational events held at members’ places of business in the San Francisco

Bay Area, an annual conference event held at the Presidio in San Francisco, and individual interviews held at the participant's place of business, constituted the physical sites of this study. Additionally, the *Ladies Who Launch* interactive Web site where members can log on to discuss business concerns and questions, along with posting advertisements for their entrepreneurial venture was an electronic site used in this study. Here, individual members of the *Ladies Who Launch* are profiled each month to encourage and exhibit successful business strategies to other members.

Profile of Participants

The participants' demographic backgrounds were varied in age, education, ethnicity, and family structure. Of the nine participants, three were of African-American descent, one was of Middle Eastern descent, and five were of mixed European descent. Educational background ranged from a high school diploma to the doctoral level. Of the nine participants, four had received Master's degrees, two had obtained Ph.D.s, two had received Bachelor's degrees, and one did not go beyond a high school diploma in formal education. Four of the nine participants held degrees in Psychology, two of which were advanced degrees in this major. Two participants held Business degrees, one of which was an advanced M.B.A. program. One participant held both a lower and advanced degree in Education; and another held an Engineering degree and an advanced degree in Leadership Studies. The average age of the nine participants was 39 years of age. Four of the nine participants had been raised in single-family homes, with the mother as the primary caregiver. Eight participants had from one to four siblings, with only one participant as an only child of the family structure. Table 1 is representative of each participant's demographic information. The first and last initials of each member's name

constitute the first column of this table. Pseudonyms have been assigned as requested by the participants in this study.

Table 1

Participant's Demographic Information

	Age	Education	Ethnicity	Family Structure
NB	39	B.A. in Education; M.A. in School Counseling	African American	single parent - mother (one sibling)
DB	25	B.S. in Biomechanical Engineering; M.S. in Policy, Organization and Leadership Studies	African American	single parent - mother (one sibling)
AC	31	B.A. in Business Speech Communications	Spanish/European	single parent - mother (only child)
SD	38	B.A. and M.A. in Psychology	Middle Eastern	two Parents (two siblings)
FF	42	B.A. in Science; M.B.A. in Marketing	African American	two Parents (four siblings)
KG	31	B.A. in Literature and Psychology	Caucasian	single parent - mother (one sibling)
BM	58	Ph.D in Clinical Psychology	Caucasian	two Parents (one sibling)
PT	54	H.S Diploma	Caucasian	two Parents (one sibling)
CW	36	Ph.D in Clinical Psychology	Caucasian	two Parents (one sibling)

The demographic information provided similarities among this sampling of women entrepreneurs, which is reflective of the larger group. Since 90% of the participants were graduates from college, this indicates an interrelationship between education and entrepreneurship. This aspect is supported by Davidson and Burke (2000), who found that women business owners were generally highly educated and had similar demographic backgrounds. Based on the varied age and ethnicity, it would appear that

women entrepreneurs are not of one majority. Of the 44% of women entrepreneurs who were raised by a single parent, half of this percentage attributes the parent as a direct influence to the choice of entrepreneurship. Although the demographic information is informative, it was essential to this study to understand the personality of each participant, as it related to their motivations for entrepreneurship and their choice to join the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. A brief description of each participant, through the lens of the researcher, follows.

Nicole was a young woman, Master's graduate, who had recently left her job as a bank underwriter to begin her own venture. She had experienced a difficult relationship in this business, and was excited to begin her own company. She had a thoughtful demeanor with a ready sense of humor and enjoyed meeting new entrepreneurs through the incubator experience. Her company was called She Runs, a running apparel store for women.

Danielle was a young woman and a Master's graduate, who had studied entrepreneurship through a program at Stanford University. She had definite ideas about leadership and felt a strong responsibility to give back to the community in helping others to find their place in business. She was a prior graduate from an incubator series, and had owned her own company called Gutsy Partners, for one and a half years. Her company offered small business services for the women entrepreneur.

Alice was a young woman, a college graduate, who had solid marketing experience in the corporate world. A trip to Thailand made a deep impression on her in regard to finding a purpose in career choice. The people of this country worked and traveled in simplicity, and portrayed a sense peace about their way of life and choice of

work. Once back in the States, she founded her own company, Business Leggs, which offers promotional business services to other companies. She runs the San Francisco Chapter of the *Ladies Who Launch* incubator series, networking events and plans the conference each year for the San Francisco Region.

Susan was a young woman, a Master's graduate, who had worked in many different areas as an artist, counselor, and bookkeeper before earnestly starting her own company called Om Freely & Yoto Bags. This was an accessory store, offering imprinted shirts and carry bags for women. She was a prior graduate from an incubator series, and held her independence in business as a top priority.

Faith was a young woman, a Master's graduate, who had left the corporate world in frustration. She had years of prior business experience, but realized that starting her own company brought her peace. Her company, The Power of Beauty, offered a line of organic soaps for women. She was a prior graduate from an incubator series, and had a tremendous sense of energy and humor.

Kristen was a young woman, a college graduate, who had been employed in minor jobs, but had always wanted to start her own company. Her company was called Soulstice Spa, which offered a line of chemical-free lotions and nail polish. She was very concerned with protecting the environment, and felt that businesses should address this issue. She had a quiet but articulate manner, and was a recent graduate of an incubator series.

Bonnie (Ph.D.) was a mature woman who had several years experience as a clinical psychologist. She was a prior graduate from an incubator series, and contributed thoughtful insights to the nature of women in business and in leadership. She was very

articulate in her description of her own motivations in regard to entrepreneurship. Her company, Full Circle Institute, offers counseling services to top women executives in the corporate world.

Penny was a mature woman who had just finished raising her family. She had begun an entrepreneurial business in real estate before she was married and was quite successful. She was a very creative individual that had a number of projects in mind for an entrepreneurial venture. She was a recent graduate from the incubator series, and felt encouraged to seek out a venture that suited her interests.

Celci (Ph.D.) was an accomplished entrepreneur having begun a pharmaceutical line of nutrients for athletes prior to attending an incubator series. She had achieved a level of business that only one other participant enjoyed. Her emphasis was on personal freedom that was partly achieved by financial freedom. She was articulate about how she viewed women in business and how they should pursue financial freedom with the same drive as men, without feelings of guilt.

In addition to the demographic information, the study addressed two research questions. These questions explored the motivational factors of women entrepreneurs and a choice of membership in a women's organization.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked: What motivational factors of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization members led each to begin an entrepreneurial venture in business? The following themes emerged from the women entrepreneurial participants as a result of the responses to the research question: Relational models, motivational obstacles, and leadership qualities.

Relational Models

Of the nine participants, seven listed a close family member as having a direct influence upon the choice for entrepreneurship. A close friend or working relationship was a secondary influence upon this choice. This theme supports a relational influence upon women's future inclinations toward entrepreneurship. Family influence was viewed as an identifying variable for entrepreneurship in women. In a study of 500 women entrepreneurs, a significant percentage of the participants had either an entrepreneurial model or entrepreneurial parents as an influence in choosing entrepreneurship (Morris et al., 2006). This theme of family influence was described in the form of both positive and negative models by the participants of this study. Of the nine participants, two family models formed a negative inclination toward entrepreneurship, while five other models were positive influences for this choice. These seven models involved a close family relation as a mother, father, or grandfather. The following remarks are representative:

(Nicole) I watched my mother work at a government job that she hated, for 30 years. I don't want to spend 30 years of my life doing something that I don't like with people I don't like and where it's uncomfortable every single day.

(Kristen) When I think about it, it was more directly related to experiences that I had when I was young versus people. My father died unexpectedly when I was seven. I took seeing what can happen in life at an early age, instead of being afraid of what can happen. If you can get through that, you can get through anything.

(Danielle) My mom actually started a wallpapering business after my parents were divorced. I would go with her on jobs and help her cut the paper, and put the glue on back and help her hang it. I think this was my first exposure to entrepreneurship.

(Faith) I would have to say my mother. She had to give up going to school and give up her dream of becoming a math professor, but she really loved real estate. She always believed in having your own home, so she made sure that everyone of her kids had their own home. She believed in pushing you to do your best. She was there for me.

(Bonnie) I would say, unconsciously, it was my Grandfather, because he was the person I knew who had his own business. He was a cabinetmaker, and at that time I was in my young educational journey. I just wanted to work for myself.

(Penny) I saw my Grandfather buy a home and pay it off in a year. I saw my parents and the struggle they went through to buy a home, but I saw the benefits of owning a home and the way they felt owning, so that led to real estate.

(Celci) I am more in temperament like my Grandfather He knew people really well and he was very shrewd. He made a fortune. I remember him being very popular, and energetic sort of larger-than-life character. I think there are some things that get passed down. I am convinced as a psychologist that something does get passed down.

Another relational theme involved friends and a working relationship that influenced the remaining participants toward entrepreneurship. Again, the emphasis is upon a relationship formed that guided a choice in this arena. The following remarks are representative:

(Alice) I would say it was my friend Kate. She and I worked together at a company called Salesforce. She was one of the people I called when I had my “Ah Ha” that I wanted to have my own business. She was the person that told me about *Ladies Who Launch*. She was one of the most supportive people, and always has been throughout.

(Susan) I think I was more inspired by the people I worked for. I always worked with people, especially women, who ran their own businesses.

Motivational Obstacles

A strong theme of motivation to escape the traditional business model was present in all of the participants. These women felt that the corporate framework was limiting to their creativity and their desire to achieve success. The feelings of being limited and blocked from moving upward provided a strong motivation to move into the arena of entrepreneurship. According to a study conducted by Buttner and Moore (1997), reasons for leaving were described as a “push” factors such as job dissatisfaction or “pull” factors such as economic opportunity (p.34). (Morris et al., 2006) described the most important

motives of women entrepreneurs as “the ability to do what I want to do, personal expression, making a living, professional flexibility and helping people.” These “push” and “pull” elements provided the impetus to change career paths. The remarks that follow are reflective:

(Nicole) Just seeing the processes that seemed a little unfair and unjust, working really hard for a two percent increase. You know, money is a motivator, and at least feeling like if you’re working so hard on something, why not have it be something of your own and where you feel some sort of ownership and take pride in it. My last job, in particular, no matter how hard I worked or no matter what I did, the manager that I was working for – it went unappreciated and I was undervalued. So that was a major challenge for me and definitely had a major impact on my desire to start the company and get it going and just work as hard as I possible could, and just redirect my energy and my effort into that.

(Danielle) I think for me, I actually went into the working world with a little bit of a chip on my shoulder having been exposed to the things I was exposed to at such a young age. I worked for a non-profit first, teaching entrepreneurship to high school students. I had a lot of investors and different people visiting my classroom. We were doing things that were valuable that were important, and I personally became frustrated with the fact that we continuously had to beg for money to keep doing the good work. I have learned a lot, but the negative experiences – feeling limited, not getting promoted when you have accomplished the goals of a certain level is unfair and limiting.

(Alice) I didn’t like what I was doing. I didn’t like the path I had to take in these different levels of achievement that I had to hit in order to move on to the next level. I didn’t even like what the levels were. To reach the ultimate goal, which was the big carrot, this was the money. There were too many pains involved with the career path in order to get to the money, so that was one. It was also a physical obstacle. I loathed going every day from a certain time, which always went longer than it was supposed to be, and started earlier than it was supposed to be, but you just had to be there. I hated being chained to my desk, which was torture to me. I would be up, moving around, and chatting all the time. I couldn’t sit still. So to be forced to sit in a cubicle and focus like that - it was suffocating for me.

(Susan) I can’t say the corporate world has posed many obstacles especially because the people I have worked for have been so nontraditional themselves. They were escaping the corporate world. That’s why they were starting their own businesses.

(Faith) A major obstacle for me was being in Corporate America. I went to work for Pepsi, R.J. Reynolds tobacco, African Pride Hair Care Products and another

beverage company, and they were all nightmares. I hated it. I've had four nightmares and they've all had something in common, me. So, obviously I'm not fitting into their world.

(Kristen) Sometimes I think that people think it is a choice to not be in the corporate world, but I think for some of us, we literally couldn't function, and I know for myself, I wouldn't last very long at all if someone made me commute an hour each way. What is normal in our society, it makes me anxious to even live along that threshold for a period of time, so for me it is an obstacle.

(Bonnie) After working with the clinical population for about 25 years, I burned out. I basically let that practice atrophy and when I was done with my last psychotherapy client, I did not take any more psychotherapy clients. I worked in corporate America as a way to put myself through school. I just didn't like working for people. I didn't like following orders. I didn't like living someone else's dream. I always felt like, you don't know who I am and what great ideas I have, and you're paying me to pay your own bills.

(Penny) I don't like keeping a schedule, although I did for four years for a company. The whole nine to five thing, and hour of commute each way and I hated it. I felt like I was in prison. I never saw daylight. And that probably helped me – that was probably my biggest motivation. I wanted to get out and do my own thing. I didn't like being told what to do, and of course you are working like crazy for very little money – there was no real potential there. I wasn't going to go anywhere.

(Celci) I worked for a large corporate company as a personal assistant to the CEO. He was a tyrant. It was an incredibly stressful place for me to be in. He was a guy that demeaned in ways that were hard to identify, but you know you feel it. I quit because of this experience. I also worked for the judicial council in the domestic violence department. As much as I liked the work, I used to literally feel like parts of my brain were dying because the thinking in that environment was incredibly limited and cycled into this government structure. It drove me crazy. I just thought to myself – this is not my life. I'm not going to do this, sit in this kind of crap every day to go to a place where I feel like I'm dying. This is not my life!

Leadership Skills

Of all the themes that surfaced from the factors that influence women in their choice for entrepreneurship, the theme of leadership was foundational among this sample of participants. These women attributed prior work experience in the corporate field as instrumental in preparing them to lead their own ventures. The view that leadership skills are more important to women entrepreneurs in the initial phase of business was explored

in Winn (2004) and seen as essential to prevent business failure. The following remarks are representative:

(Nicole) I really valued the customer service aspect of all the previous jobs that I have had. I also learned about sales and marketing, organizational skills when I worked for some non-profits and all of these skills are needed in my own business.

(Danielle) I've actually learned a lot from my corporate and non-profit experience. I think I've learned a lot about what I don't want to do in my own company and how I really want to treat people and value people. I think I also have learned about paying your dues.

(Alice) I was truly blessed to be in that [Salesforce] company. I talked about it like I had to get out of there, but that is also like a child having to get out of the home. They gave me so many tools and resources that were absolutely invaluable.

(Susan) I think my strength as a bookkeeper helps me when it comes to dealing with the back end of business – taxes, government, book-keeping, finances, and compliance issues are all part of running your own business.

(Faith) My previous experience in retail helped me know this aspect very well for my own business because that has been four years in grocery retail. I have been either on the retail side or being on the supply side.

(Bonnie) As a practitioner, as a therapist, I was always successful. I never had any trouble handling the business end of the things I did, and I liked that independence.

(Penny) I had a lot of success early on. I got my feet wet in the drapery business and an electronics company, then went into real estate, which I always wanted to do, I had success in real estate. I was only 21 and I had about three or four houses by then.

Additional leadership qualities of confidence [courage] and tenacity

[perseverance, determination] were mentioned most frequently as requirements to starting and maintaining an entrepreneurial venture. These qualities appear to be interwoven with the characteristics of risk-taking and the need for achievement. The following remarks are representative:

(Nicole) Confidence that is one. No one is going to follow anybody that is unsure, that is mealy-mouthed, and that isn't standing up straight shoulders back, even if

they are scared to death.

(Danielle) The first one is confidence. I think it is understanding your own talents and skills and that you do have something to bring to the table. I definitely think the kind of perseverance and tenacity that says “I am not going to take no for an answer, I going to make this happen” is important. I think women starting their own businesses have to think that way.

(Susan) I think courage and tenacity would be the two. But I think there is so much more.

(Bonnie) I would say a really strong belief in yourself, a self confidence and attachment to a dream that causes you to believe in yourself, that it is alive, it’s palpable and you want to create it, and then the other piece is determination.

(Penny) I think that it’s important to believe in what you do and actually do it yourself. I knew how to do it and I had the guts, because I didn’t know what I didn’t know. Whatever I am selling I need to do it and believe in it; that is one of the most important parts of being successful.

(Celci) I think the two strongest things for me are temperance and being able to make decisions strongly and quickly. You have to be able to instill something in people, where they trust you and believe you.

A tolerance to risk-taking and the desire for achievement [self-motivation] in an entrepreneurial venture were important elements in leadership as mentioned by a majority of the participants as they spoke of courage and determination. The aspects of risk-taking and the need (n) for achievement are used to describe the entrepreneurial personality according to McClelland (1961), and are the basis for his theory of achievement. The following remarks are representative:

(Faith) I am very motivated to do what I love, and that is event planning. I am very organized and detail oriented and I like to be a little bit ahead of the rest; I like to be out front. [Achievement]

(Kristen) [Regarding risk-taking] I don’t think you’re conscious of it. You look at what is possible, what is there. I’ve always looked at it that way.

(Celci) Being non-reactive and having a tolerance to risk are really important [Regarding risk-taking] There is a drive to claim or reclaim whatever it is. I think it is my ability to pull myself out of where I was, that I have no fears about it – that is why I can tolerate the risk, because I don’t have any fear that I won’t pull

through it, but it can be a very solitary kind of thing, because there is no one to bail you out if it goes bad.

(Danielle) I think one of the great things about successful entrepreneurs is that they dive in and they don't realize all of the things that could go wrong, because sometimes those are the things that stop you from moving and stop you from doing it. There is a lot of risk. So you have to learn to educate yourself enough to try to minimize certain risk, but ultimately, you are still going to risk something, whether it's time or money, your pride or your comfort, you're still risking something by doing it, but you have to have that courage to step out and be willing to fail and try again.

(Susan) You have to have a tolerance for risk because you are out on a limb, one, with your idea and two, with finances. So a tolerance to chance and a willingness to trust and see what happens and just step out. Because I can take the risks, I do. I have learned something with everything I've done and every fear overcome is a freedom gained. So, I would rather make all the mistakes possible and not be afraid the next time. You learn something each step of the way.

(Bonnie) [Regarding risk-taking] I don't think you're conscious of it. You look at what is possible, what is there. I've always looked at stuff- if you can get through it, you can get through anything. If I make this choice, and it turns out to be a bad choice, I can get past it.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked: What benefits does the *Ladies Who Launch* organization offer their members that serve to strengthen their personal, business, and leadership skills? The following themes emerged from the women entrepreneurial participants in response to this research question: Networking Opportunities, Incubator Experience, and Organizational Leadership Opportunities.

Networking Opportunities

The majority of the participants indicated that the networking aspect of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization afforded a broad platform for economic success through a social network of women entrepreneurs. This dynamic was explored in *Entrepreneurship Through Social Networks* by Aldrich and Zimmer (1986). The aspects of increased productivity, social resources and an extensiveness of ties between individuals within the

network are applicable to the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. According to the members who were participants of this study, the organization provided accelerated learning opportunities in business strategies, financial opportunities, and increased contacts with other women in business. The following remarks were representative:

(Nicole) So, it's the opposite of the boy's club. It's the girl's club. Having a network of women who are going through the same thing or who have some sort of insight to what you might be experiencing is extremely valuable. Definitely, networking has had an impact on my business. I received new contacts and new exposure to my company all because of my affiliation with *Ladies Who Launch*. I think one of the things they give is the help I need with the networking aspect and understanding how important that was.

(Danielle) It built a kind of camaraderie and I think that only helps you to be successful. *Ladies Who Launch* has helped me redefine what networking is. There is a genuine interest in seeing you be successful regardless of whether or not you have something to give that person. I think that has been really powerful, seeing what networking can do, and what networking is when we all are committed to seeing everyone be successful. The traditional model, which is male dominated is very competitive, there is only one prize only one person can be on top.

(Susan) When you are a member, you have access to media outlets, networking with other groups, and creative alliances. The *Ladies Who Launch* organization is the networking, because women are natural net workers. They are constantly creating networking opportunities. Women bond and want to talk to each other. Women want to hear how other women are doing. I don't know enough about men, but I would say that they're not going to let down their fears as much and not commiserate with other business owners. Nor do I see them readily sharing their resources. There's a lot of competition I think, where women naturally share their resources, share their experience.

(Faith) It really is the people aspect of networking and reaching out for human resources. I think the biggest thing is the networking aspect. They do not teach you hard – core business skills. It is more the softer skills, the networking being able to interact with other people, being polite, being flexible, being bendable, being open to meeting new and different people and being able to rely on other people. Our connection is the *Ladies Who Launch*.

(Kristen) I think what is very valuable is the information sharing and how open the women in the group are with publicity, marketing, sharing the opportunities and complementary businesses have been fantastic. I've met some great women that I've become personally close to professionally and personally. I've really got a lot out of networking in terms of sharing the information. In terms of women's

organizations, women are much freer with information and I have noticed that a lot of my vendors and other partners in companies are women. You have access to the national organization in terms of the message board, opportunities, and see our press that is sent out on a national scale, it is a benefit. As you move away from the incubator experience, you gain more access to national opportunities, which is an absolute benefit and it strengthens your whole network. By far the most useful thing to me is PR opportunities, all the press, magazines, TV; they want stories on women entrepreneurs so they will go to organizations like *Ladies Who Launch* to find people to profile and write about.

(Bonnie) I think the first piece of it is that it is a group supportive environment. Many of the women have been in corporate America and they have been moderately successful. Now they are going to go out on their own and that fledgling step requires a good deal of support, and *Ladies Who Launch* does provide that. The amount of access to different kinds of services that can move you along and also expose you to potential clients and people is the networking aspect. You can find resources from all over the place. It depends upon how deeply you want to be involved, and how aggressive you are, and how much you're on the website and connecting with people, but it's an enormous opportunity for networking.

(Penny) I loved what one person said, which was "There is no reason you have to pick something. You just do all of it." So I have been doing it all and integrating it and having a great time with it. I'm really excited about it. So I mean, having her just say that, sometimes it is as simple as that – one person can be a network.

(Celci) My own personal view would be to hire my own PR person and connect her into the network. My PR person can glean opportunities from the network, and I think it's a great resource for that. Somebody that can work the system to produce opportunities for the company I think would be great. I think one of the things the *Ladies Who Launch* organization need is a deeper set of talents and experience, so they have people on all of the levels of business.

Incubator Experience

The benefits of the incubator program included a four-step process of meetings, each session focused on drawing out the creative ideas new members had to start their own venture. This program was effective in providing support to novice entrepreneurs and modeled the description of a business incubator according to the National Business Incubation Association (2002), which states "that business incubation is a business support process that accelerates the successful development of start-up and fledgling

companies by providing entrepreneurs with an array of targeted resources and services” (p. 1). In the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, specifically in regard to the San Francisco chapter, the incubator was composed of a total of eight women entrepreneurs and the incubator director of the region. These eight members met weekly for a total of four weeks and went through a guided curriculum, which included trends in entrepreneurship, vision, “voice” of the entrepreneur and the final project description of each member’s vision for their venture. These incubator groups appeared to form cohorts of new networks, as each incubator experience introduced new members to the existing network. Guidelines of the incubator sessions ensured protection of ideas and encouragement to explore the possibilities of a new business by having the incubator members “vision” for each other in a written format. Members were given a personal password to access the much larger on-line network of the *Ladies Who Launch* entrepreneurs of different business levels at the end of the incubator experience. The incubator experience appeared to be a positive model for a majority of the participants as the following remarks were representative:

(Nicole) [Incubator experience] showed me the possibilities of where it could go and the ideas of how to get there, hearing the other women - their visions of where they saw me without the hang ups that I have because they didn’t have those hang-ups. You’re around a bunch of women who have all the same goal of being supportive of your success and not being competitive with me. I don’t know if that was because we were all in different stages, from people who did not know what they wanted to do to other people who had very clear ideas.

(Danielle) [Incubator experience] it is the help of business visioning or expanded vision which is what you do for all the women in your incubator. You listen to them talk about their business ideas and then you think and noodle and brainstorm about all the possibilities for them. And it is amazing what other people can see in you in just one meeting and a couple of hours sitting with you and all of a sudden they have this grand vision of your business and of you as the leader. You walk away with a plethora of ideas and some of them are immediate, but some may be five to ten years out for your business

I think that it [Incubator experience] supported some of the ideas I've had about my own business and the things I want to do and the ideas I want to bring into it. They emphasize creating a business that fits your lifestyle.

(Susan) The *Ladies Who Launch* organization is great because one of the things they talk about in the incubators is how women do things differently than men. Often women don't write business plans and often women rely on family and friends. I went through the incubator last October 2006. I had two businesses in conception, and then a year later I had a product, two websites and two businesses. My "Live" event was the first public debut of my companies. So it was year conception to year of websites, trademarks, and products.

(Faith) I think it would be great if the *Ladies Who Launch* [incubators] would reach out to women who are not into service – based ventures, like investment bankers, accountants and Hi Tech entrepreneurs. There are a smaller number of women that are actually in Hi Tech. We need the women engineers and those into manufacturing. I think we need to apply other skills and other connections in these types of businesses.

(Kristen) In my own business, I know from where I start, it's the process of learning, because I just never started a product business before.

(Bonnie) The steps the incubator takes you through, forces you to articulate what it is that you want to do, and how you are going to go about it. Then the feedback that you get from the other women as they go through the guided incubator process boosts your energy level and the excitement and the fun of doing this, because you get such positive feedback from everyone who is in the incubator that you are in.

(Penny) The *Ladies Who Launch* [Incubator experience] is inspiring because you get to see a lot of different people doing a lot of different things and you can learn from all of this for your own business.

(Celci). [*Ladies Who Launch*] they do get a lot of people at the entry points that are just coming into their first venture. I can see that the [Incubator experience] that's your first point of entry, and if you don't have much confidence in yourself, that might be a good point of entry for some women. For me, the [Incubator experience] might have been useful if I had been with a group of women that were much further along in their businesses.

Organizational Leadership Opportunities

This theme was important to the majority of the participants in a two-fold manner.

The San Francisco Director provided leadership opportunities for the personal business success of the participants. The organization as a whole provided other opportunities to

exercise leadership skills for the participants as members of the organization. However, organizational leadership opportunities within this organization were less important to the participants than the individual skills needed to guide their individual ventures. The following remarks were representative:

(Nicole) You are able to talk to other women who are leaders and getting to know them and hearing their thoughts about how they might handle situations is valuable. Observing women who are really successful in their businesses, and even women who are not that successful, you can learn lessons from them in regard to what not to do in business.

(Danielle) I think there are a lot of great leadership opportunities in *Ladies Who Launch*. Especially in the on-going program, women get invited to be the speaker and you get to talk about your business. Especially in the start-up phase, I think there is a lot of opportunity for people to focus on their leadership development and that was sort of the impetus, even for me for my business. Ultimately, as an entrepreneur you are a leader; you are leading your own business. You are leading your employees, you are the face of your company and there are so many great skills that you need, and can enhance to grow your business better if you were working on them.

(Alice) I have had to truly step up as a community leader and as a business woman. The women coming to the incubator don't want an insecure rookie leading them down the path of entrepreneurship. I have to lead with confidence and enthusiasm which is not something that can be faked. I genuinely have to believe in the things I am saying to them as well as the mission of *Ladies Who Launch*.

Within our community, there are individuals who stick out more than others. They emerge as experts in their field and are therefore leaders within the group. They naturally get special recognition and attention from the members. Additionally, since I started, I have now brought on four other women to lead in other cities. These women not only did incredibly well during their own incubation, but they also wanted to keep going and help spread it to the rest of the bay area. They will lead the workshops as I have done and will be contributing to the growth of their markets.

Members who want to lead with success must have a positive attitude and confidence. They must see mistakes as learning opportunities. They should be knowledgeable about business matters and have a business mind-frame that is not rigid but fluid. They have to be able to speak publicly, talk to strangers, engage people who are not as friendly, ask questions and find the pain point in someone's story and be able to relate to it. They must be able to connect people with others

who can help. They must have a strong network and a desire to continue to build it.

(Susan) If you're a financial manager, you can volunteer speaking to the group about financial management. Those are leadership skills. Those are skills you get to practice in a supportive, safe environment. I would say that because you have a forum where you might have information that you can disseminate or you might be a leader in your field, you have a built in forum to practice. Alice, the Director, is a real part of why San Francisco *Ladies Who Launch* is so successful. She provides those [leadership] opportunities.

(Faith) *Ladies Who Launch* develops your soft people skills and it also helps you to delegate. You are becoming more businesslike. That is a great opportunity to gain publicity and visibility for your own business.

(Kristen) The San Francisco Chapter is so influenced by the Director's personality, and what she brings to women's business and entrepreneurship, and that is true of anyone who is leading, they have an individual style. It's her personality, she is very supportive.

(Bonnie) I think a lot of it is personal makeup. I have been drawn to leadership positions and attained other leadership positions all the time. What it did for me in terms of that was it gave me feedback on the reality that leadership does come naturally to me. It was affirming.

(Penny) Well, probably the biggest is the responsibility I felt as a leader. Alice, [San Francisco Director] was really good about keeping everybody focused and on a schedule. It was very motivating.

(Celci) That's not really what they are trying to instill. If you wanted to know how to be a better leader, there are other organizations I might choose to develop leadership skills, *Ladies Who Launch* would not be my choice for that, they are about creating networks.

Summary of the Findings

Research Question 1 asked: What motivational factors of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization members led each to begin an entrepreneurial venture in business? Eight of the nine participants viewed their college education as important in equipping them with the discipline to learn what was needed to begin a venture. Seven of the nine participants felt that a close family member had a direct impact on their choice to become an entrepreneur. This included both positive and negative role models of family members in

entrepreneurial and corporate businesses. Seven participants experienced positive modeling from a family member who had begun an entrepreneurial venture, whereas the remaining participants had experienced a negative or neutral model from a family member who had remained in corporate employment.

In regard to the participant's own personal experience, the majority of the participants described "push" factors that worked in conjunction to motivate each into an entrepreneurial venture. "Push" factors were described as limiting job advancements, long work and commute hours, restrictive salary increases, and a stifling of creativity. "Pull" factors were described as financial opportunities, autonomy in conducting an entrepreneurial venture and freedom to create a unique business.

All of the participants viewed leadership qualities and skills as important to developing and running a successful venture. Leadership skills gained from prior corporate experience enabled the participants to view entrepreneurship as a freedom to create a unique venture, providing independence, financial gain, and a flexible schedule. Additional leadership qualities mentioned by the participants did not vary widely, with courage and tenacity as the most frequently mentioned attribute. All of the nine participants viewed the factors of risk-taking and the desire for achievement as integral leadership characteristics needed to begin and maintain an entrepreneurial venture.

Research Question 2 asked: What benefits does the *Ladies Who Launch* offer their members that serve to strengthen their personal, business and leadership skills? All of the participants viewed the networking opportunities provided by this organization as important in regard to building a successful venture. The participants described the benefits of networking in terms of additional resources, expanded client base, and

business advice. Five of the nine participants, excluding the Director, viewed the incubator experience as important to developing an idea for a venture and giving support to begin a new business. Three of the participants did not view the incubator experience as helpful to their already existing venture. They viewed the existing incubator sessions as meeting the needs of the novice entrepreneur. These participants felt that the women's organization should offer levels of incubator experience that would meet the needs of the more experienced entrepreneur. Opinions varied among the participants in regard to the leadership opportunities provided by the women's organization. Seven of the nine participants felt that the organization did provide different types of leadership involvement, whereas two of the participants viewed the organization as only providing networking opportunities.

However, the majority of the participants viewed individual leadership skills as more important than the organizational leadership opportunities. The leadership influence of the Director was viewed favorably by the participants who had gone through the incubator experience in the San Francisco Chapter. These participants attributed the Director with a unique leadership style that was a model for confidence and as an avenue for further leadership opportunities within the organization of the *Ladies Who Launch*.

Chapter V presents a discussion of the major findings, along with the conclusions and implications for the study. The chapter ends with recommendations for professional practices and for further research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Something made greater by ourselves and in turn that makes us greater.” Maya Angelou, *Defining Work. Conversations with Maya Angelou*, 1989 (McGovern et al., 2005, p. 17)

Discussion and Conclusions

This research study explored the motivating factors of women choosing the field of entrepreneurship and joining the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. It further explored the benefits women gain by joining this organization and the impact this may have on furthering the trend of entrepreneurship in women. The researcher investigated the impact of this organization by using the following two research questions to guide the study: The first question explored factors that influenced *Ladies Who Launch* members to choose the path of entrepreneurship. The second question explored the member’s view of the benefits they gained in joining the *Ladies Who Launch* organization.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 explored motivational factors that influenced *Ladies Who Launch* members to choose entrepreneurship. Research findings indicated that the factors of education level, family member and role, “Push” elements of job dissatisfaction, and entrenchment were strong elements affecting choice. “Pull” factors of increased financial opportunities, autonomy in business and freedom to create a unique venture influenced the choice and the continuation of the entrepreneurial venture.

The demographic information indicated that the majority of the women viewed their educational level as important preparation for entrepreneurship. Family models in both a positive and negative role influenced a majority of the women to consider an entrepreneurial venture in adulthood. Prior business experience of the members was

viewed by a majority as both detrimental and beneficial. Corporate experience was described as detrimental in the restrictions of salary, job promotion, flexibility, and creativity, creating a “Push” factor into entrepreneurship. The same corporate experience was described as beneficial to members in equipping them with leadership skills that made the transition into entrepreneurship easier. Once engaged in a venture, the women described entrepreneurship in “Pull” factors of independence, financial gain, flexibility, and the ability to create a unique business. Additional leadership qualities of courage and tenacity were viewed as important by a majority of the members in regard to starting a venture and in continuing the venture to successive levels. In addition, the need for achievement and the quality of risk-taking were found to be strong leadership elements in the initial step into an entrepreneurial venture, and the continuation in the venture.

A review of the literature from Davidson and Burke (2000) indicated that the majority of women entrepreneurs were highly educated and had prior business experience that comprised the largest group moving into entrepreneurship. Morris et al. (2006) indicated that a significant percentage of the participants had either an entrepreneurial role model or entrepreneurial parents as an influence in choosing an entrepreneurial venture (p. 23). Buttner and Moore (1997) indicated that the “push” and “pull” factors influence women into entrepreneurship, with the “pull” factors of opportunity or challenge outweighing the “push” factors of job dissatisfaction or necessity. Burke et al. (2002) indicated that both women and men entrepreneurs desired independence and leadership in running their own businesses. McClelland (1961) indicated that entrepreneurs would exhibit “moderate risk-taking” and “that high (n) need for achievement leads people to behave in most of the ways they should behave if they are to

fulfill the entrepreneurial role successfully as it has been defined by economists, historians and sociologists” (p. 238).

It is the researcher’s opinion that the research findings have indicated that the participants of this study mirror the characteristics and factors described in the literature in regard to the motivations for entering into entrepreneurship. Each of the participants could be described as having a high (n) need of achievement, even driven to accomplish success in an entrepreneurial venture. The majority of the participants had experienced “Push” factors of job dissatisfaction and “Pull” factors of opportunity and creativity that sought expression in a business of one’s own making. However, most of the participants dealt in a product or service that catered to women not to men.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 explored benefits the *Ladies Who Launch* organization offered their members to strengthen their personal, business and leadership skills. Research findings indicated that benefits included networking, incubator experience, and organizational leadership opportunities.

Benefits derived from networking opportunities provided by the organization were cited by the members as an important advantage in furthering their entrepreneurial businesses. This included increased visibility of their businesses through contacts gained in meeting events and through the official Web site of the *Ladies Who Launch*. Additional support in the form of mentor advice to new business owners or information about business matters in general was viewed by the members as an important aspect of this organization. Some constructive criticisms were offered by members in regard to the levels of networking. This included a desire to have a more advanced level of networking

that included experienced women entrepreneurs who would be able to advise members who were not new entrepreneurs. Another preference was to include women in the network who had manufacturing and accounting ventures that could introduce these skills to other members who wished to begin a business in this area. A majority of the members felt that the incubator experience was valuable in helping them to realize their business idea in a supportive environment. This experience helped them to define the way women may approach business in a gender specific way that is different but equally acceptable. The incubator experience seemed to provide members with an initial contact group for encouragement and advice. Only two members felt that the incubator experience did not benefit their businesses. It was regarded by these members as not offering enough support in the higher-level business they were already operating. They viewed the incubator experience as more inclined to the novice women entrepreneur.

The organizational leadership opportunities described by the members was varied. Some members viewed the *Ladies Who Launch* organization as a built-in audience to practice skills as public speaking or managing an event around their products. This audience was referred to as the network of women entrepreneurs inter-linked through the website and incubator experience. Other members felt that the incubator experience helped them to define the leadership role they wanted to assume in their own venture, or affirmed their existing leadership. Still others felt that the *Ladies Who Launch* organization did not affect their view or benefit their already existing skills in leadership. They maintained that the organization was primarily a networking organization for women entrepreneurs. It is the opinion of the researcher that organizational leadership opportunities benefited those members who were consistently involved in the meetings

and events that were provided by the organization; those members that invested in learning leadership skills through the organization received the most benefit in refining their leadership skills.

A review of the literature from Aldrich and Zimmer (1986, pp. 3, 24) indicated that the functions of networks included “social forces that increase density of networks, the diversity of the network that increases the productivity of the entrepreneur and social resources embedded in the entrepreneur’s network.” These functions were evident in the networking aspect of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, and provided benefits of increased resources and individual gain for members. Networking opportunities and support provided a platform to form a new business for entrepreneurs (Allen, 2000). A majority of the members indicated that the network frame of this organization provided impetus in starting their ventures. In Aldrich et al. (1997), networking provided an avenue for increased business contacts for financial gain and obtaining advice in financial matters. O’Donnell (2004) indicated that network organizations attract and promote growth potential for entrepreneur’s ventures. The members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization used the network of this organization in the same manner. Totterman and Sten (2005) related the business incubator to increased networking for business success. Bollintoft and Uhloi (2005) referred to the benefits of the incubator experience in facilitating exchange of knowledge and business opportunities for small ventures. These features were replicated within the incubator experience for a majority of the *Ladies Who Launch* members. In Pini, Brown, and Ryan (2004), advancement in leadership roles was enhanced by belonging to a network organization of women. Buttner (2001) indicated that leadership style in women entrepreneurs was relational in nature, and may be

reflective of the feminine nature. A majority of the *Ladies Who Launch* members indicated that leadership style was a gender issue and the way in which business was conducted reflected a relational approach. However, as mentioned earlier, most of the participant's choice of business catered to other women. A possible reason for this could be that women are particularly adept at knowing the needs of the customer and are responsive in care and concern for the changing needs of the customer as described in Baack et al. (1994). A known customer base is other women, and this may be a more secure step into entrepreneurship for those engaging in a business for the first time.

All of the members indicated that prior business experience increased the margin for leadership success in an entrepreneurial venture. This was indicated in Terjesen, (2005) that women with prior experience in corporate business and management transitioned into an entrepreneurial leadership role with less difficulty. This was indicated in a relational aspect by Greve and Salaff (2003) that found that women managers demonstrated a greater degree of articulation and were able to communicate more effectively with both genders for problem-solving, which would only enhance an entrepreneurial venture. It is of the researcher's opinion that a majority of the members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization were able to benefit their individual businesses through the aspects of networking, incubator experience and leadership opportunities. However, there existed a small percentage of participants that could have benefited in a greater sense from a higher level of business networks which were not available through this organization. These participants were already experienced entrepreneurs, and sought other entrepreneurs that could provide additional business advice and strategies to move their own ventures forward.

Summary of Discussion

The research has indicated that the members of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization were positively impacted in the factors that led each to begin an entrepreneurial venture and the benefits offered by this same organization. Findings indicated common motivations among the members of demographics, family influence, and role models, positive and negative experience in corporate business, and models of leadership skills. Coupled with a high need for achievement, the combination of these factors influenced each member to begin an economic enterprise. Additional findings indicated that a majority of the members were positively impacted from the benefits of networking, incubator experience and leadership opportunities provided by the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, although more experienced entrepreneurs may not benefit to the same degree as novice entrepreneurs seeking a first venture.

Implications of the Study

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau (2005), the growth of women in self-employed jobs has shown steady increase. Since 1995, from a total population of 10.4 million, women comprised 3.8 million self-employed businesses (U.S. Department of Labor, Occupations sections). The U.S. Department of Labor (2005) projected this increase to continue into 2014, with women comprising 47 % of the total labor force in the U.S. (Labor Force Participation section).

It is estimated that one in eleven adult women are entrepreneurs currently in the United States. This is a growing trend that poses many questions. What is important to women in business? How do they choose to succeed? What organizations are available that supports the way women do business and balance other responsibilities? How do

women gain leadership skills for business success and creativity? Women are taking the lead in business, but they are going about it in a much different way than the traditional approach.

In an article on the top 20 entrepreneurial ventures, author Cheryl Dahle (2004) states: “It’s an entrepreneurial revolution to rival the dotcoms – yet few, until now, have paid attention” (Sustainability section, ¶ 6).

Women leaders are moving toward developing their own businesses and joining together in women-based organizations that support and facilitate how they view business and balance their priorities. These organizations streamline the ways women use network contacts, construct businesses, and enter the market for profits. These groups provide the kind of emotional support and encouragement that businesswomen identify as a basic difference between the genders in their approach to commerce.

Women, who are enrolled in Business Administration programs at colleges currently, are more aware of this business option than ever before. Their choice to enter the corporate world or enter into entrepreneurship will greatly depend on the support systems in place for women to become successful business leaders. Programs that prepare businesswomen in this way may enhance the enrollment at Universities. Organizations that further the development of women in running their own companies, as they leave the University programs, will benefit the way women entrepreneurs impact the economy.

The implications of this study are indicative of a developing trend of businesswomen in that the findings indicated that the factors that influence women into entrepreneurship are common and the benefits of organizations like the *Ladies Who Launch* attract and support women entrepreneurs. The transition into entrepreneurship

becomes less difficult for women as they leave the corporate field of business, due to the availability of these organizations that offer support, contacts and advice. This dynamic may foster a more rapid exodus of women from the corporate arena into entrepreneurship as they experience the continued limitations of traditional business. The results of this study contributed to the provisory existing research regarding organizations that women join for business support and leadership development in creating their own businesses.

Recommendations for Professional Practices

After interviewing the members and the director of the San Francisco Chapter of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, the findings of the researcher indicated that organizations of this type foster the development of entrepreneurial ventures, and provide a model of support and advisory skills that enhance business success for women choosing to join organizations of this genre. This model of effective support and the description of other models could provide additional information for women entering into entrepreneurship. Universities that provide an Entrepreneurial Studies Program could provide information about these models in an undergraduate or graduate program enabling women entrepreneurs a sound educational base in business choice and leadership skills.

Recommendations for Future Research

With the increased departure of businesswomen leaving the corporate arena into entrepreneurship, organizations like the *Ladies Who Launch* are forming to provide support and encouragement in this field. These organizations provide a smoother transition for women leaving corporate businesses and help to establish their foundational

skills as leaders of their own ventures.

The results of this study indicate that women entrepreneurs fulfill the characteristics and motivations as described by McClelland's theory of (n) Achievement (1961). The participants exhibited similar "Push" and "Pull" factors of job dissatisfaction and economic opportunity as described by Buttner and Moore (1997), Davidson and Burke (2000), Orhan and Scott (2001), Burke et al. (2002), Mitchell (2004), and Morris et al. (2006). They valued the incubator experience as a preparation to move into an entrepreneurial venture as described by Totterman and Sten (2005) and Bollingtoft and Ulhoi (2005). The networking structure provided increased economic opportunities for entrepreneurial success as described by Aldrich and Zimmer (1986, 1998), Allen (2000), Chan and Foster (2001), Mankelow and Merrilees (2001), O'Donnell (2004), and Manolova et al. (2007). The participants regarded leadership skills as a vital requirement for both the initial and continuing phases of their ventures as described by Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991), Baack et al. (1994), Winn (2004), Chow (2005), Terjesen (2005), and Jensen and Luthans (2006).

The benefits of membership in an organization like the *Ladies Who Launch*, provided insight to the inclinations of women entrepreneurs in regard networking development, as described by Pini et al. (2004) and Waldstrom and Madsen (2005). However, the reasons why women entrepreneurs join women organizations like the *Ladies Who Launch* may be relational in nature and gender specific. This is supported by the literature as described by Buttner (2001), Greve and Salaff (2003), and Watson and Newby (2005).

There is a need for further research in the areas of gender specific styles of

business development and implementation of women entrepreneurs. The causes for the development of women business organizations and the ways in which they attract women into entrepreneurship may have a long-term economic impact. If these areas could be identified through research, the implications for economic change could be substantiated and monitored effectively.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

IRBPHS APPROVAL LETTER

From: irbphs <irbphs@usfca.edu>
To: "dddd@dddd.ddd" <dddd@dddd.ddd>
Sent: Thu, 25 Jan 2007 12:14:35

January 25, 2007

Dear Ms. Raab:

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your application has been approved by the committee (IRBPHS #06-001). Please note the following:

1. Approval expires twelve (12) months from the dated noted above. At that time, if you are still in collecting data from human subjects, you must file a renewal application.
2. Any modifications to the research protocol or changes in instrumentation (including wording of items) must be communicated to the IRBPHS. Re-submission of an application may be required at that time.
3. Any adverse reactions or complications on the part of participants must be reported (in writing) to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS at (415) 422-6091.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research..

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

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APPENDIX B

LIST OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

<u>Chapter Members:</u>	<u>Company Name:</u>
1. Nicole B.	She Runs
2. Danielle B.	Gutsey Partners
3. Susan D.	Om Freely & Yoto Bags
4. Faith F.	The Power of Beauty
5. Kristen G.	Soulstice Spa
6. Bonnie M.	Full Circle Institute
7. Penny T.	Undecided
8. Celci W.	DRC Nutraceuticals
 <u>San Francisco Bay Director:</u>	
1. Alice C.	Ladies Who Launch Business Legs

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

University of San Francisco
Department of Education

July 21, 2007

Dear _____,

My name is Dorothy Raab and I am a graduate student pursuing my Ed.D. in the School of Education, Organization and Leadership department at the University of San Francisco. I am currently preparing my proposal for defense. My research study is focused on examining the role of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization in empowering their members to achieve increased business and individual growth.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are a chapter member of an advisory group of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. Alice C. has agreed to send this Consent Document to you for your review along with a copy of my survey questions. If you agree to be in this study, you will complete the attached interview questions that ask about your business background, your entrepreneurial venture and the benefits of membership with the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. I would be happy to make an appointment with you, at your convenience, to conduct this interview in person. You can contact me by phone or e-mail if you would like me to make an appointment with you.

It is possible that some of the questions on the survey may make you feel uncomfortable, but you are free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer, or to stop participation at any time. You will not be asked to put your name on the survey, although I would like to list your title and company name in the list of research participants. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from this study.

While there will be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization and its support of women entrepreneurs.

There will be no costs to you as a result of taking part in this study, nor will you be reimbursed for your participation in this study.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact me by phone or by e-mail. If you have further questions about the study, you may contact the IRBPHS at the University of San Francisco, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. You may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the

IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street,
San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Thank you for your consideration. If you agree to participate, please call or e-mail me a
day and time for an interview appointment at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Raab
Graduate Student
University of San Francisco

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO BE A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Purpose and Background

Ms. Dorothy Raab, in the University of San Francisco, School of Education, has asked me to participate in her research study of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization. This research proposes to explore the role of this organization in benefiting women entrepreneurs who are members of the *Ladies Who Launch*.

Procedures

I agree to be a participant in this study. I am aware a voluntary interview between me and this researcher will occur. It is anticipated that I will choose to conduct this interview electronically or by making an appointment to meet with the researcher in person to conduct this interview of the survey questions. The interview will reflect my personal experiences in an entrepreneurial business, the benefits of my membership in the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, and my opinions of business leadership qualities of women in general. If I choose to conduct this interview in person, I am aware the interview will be tape recorded which may take up to 1 and 1/2 hours in length. These taped interviews will be transcribed and a copy of the transcript will be returned to me for review, editing and approval prior to use in data analysis. I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time, may discontinue the interview at any point, and my request changes or deletions. My participation in this research project is voluntary, and my name will not be used in this study.

Risks and Discomforts

I understand that I am free to decline to answer any question on the Survey.

If the Survey is conducted through a personal interview, I am free to decline to answer any question, ask for the tape recorder to be turned off, or discontinue the conversation at any time. I understand that my name will not be used. Anything I contribute to the text of the research will be protected by a pseudonym.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of the effect membership, in the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, has on women entrepreneurs and their leadership qualities.

Costs

There will be no financial costs to me as a result of taking part in this study.

Payment

There will be no payment made to me as a result of this study.

Questions

If I have any questions or comments about the study, I may contact Ms. Dorothy Raab. I may also contact her advisor, Dr. Patricia Mitchell, at the University of San Francisco, (415) 422-2079. Should I not want to address comments to either of them, I may contact the Office of Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects between 8:00AM and 5:00PM, Monday through Friday, by calling (415) 422-6091 or by writing to the IRBPHS, Psychology Department, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, California 94117-1080, USA.

Consent to Participate in Research

I have been given a cop of this consent letter to keep. I understand that my participation in the dissertation research conducted by Ms. Dorothy Raab is voluntary. I fully understand and agree with the above procedures and conditions.

Participant's Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

Dorothy Raab Date

APPENDIX E
FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Date

Participant Name and Title
Company or Organization
Address

Dear Ms.:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on (date/time). I appreciate your willingness to participate in my research study. Your interview will be a valuable part of my dissertation.

I have enclosed a transcribed copy of your interview for your review and approval. I plan to use some quotes, together with key themes from my analysis, as part of the analysis of this Case Study. If you wish to clarify, revise, add or delete comments from it, just let me know.

My projected time to complete the draft dissertation is for the end of October; therefore, I would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible. Please e-mail or call me at anytime.

Thank you again for your participation in my research.

Sincerely,

Ms. Dorothy Raab
Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
Organization and Leadership,

APPENDIX F

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Factors: Influences that determined the choice for entrepreneurship

1. What person or persons had a direct influence upon your choice to become an entrepreneur?
2. What personal experience(s) in your education or family helped you to decide to become an entrepreneur?
3. What obstacle(s) have you encountered in the traditional corporate world that motivated you toward your own business venture?
4. What previous experience in business best prepared you for entrepreneurship?
5. In your opinion, which two leadership skills are most important for women to possess, in order to succeed in an entrepreneurial business?

Benefits: Advantages gained by membership in the *Ladies Who Launch* organization

1. How has the *Ladies Who Launch* organization helped businesswomen to compete successfully in the business world?
2. What impact does networking through *Ladies Who Launch* have upon your own business?
3. How has the *Ladies Who Launch* organization affected the way you view ownership and the purpose of business for women entrepreneurs?
4. How has the *Ladies Who Launch* organization provided opportunities to gain and refine your leadership skills?

APPENDIX G

DIRECTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Factors: Influences that determined the choice for entrepreneurship

1. What person or persons had a direct influence upon your choice to become an entrepreneur?
2. What personal experience(s) in your education or family helped you to decide to become an entrepreneur?
3. What obstacle(s) have you encountered in the traditional corporate world that motivated you toward your own business venture?
4. What previous experience in business best prepared you for entrepreneurship?
5. In your opinion, which two leadership skills are most important for women to possess, in order to succeed in an entrepreneurial business?

Leadership Benefits: Leadership experience and training opportunities from the *Ladies*

Who Launch organization

1. What leadership experiences did you have prior to joining the *Ladies Who Launch* organization?
2. How did the *Ladies Who Launch* organization increase your leadership skills?
3. What opportunities in leadership does the *Ladies Who Launch* organization offer their members who are already in leadership positions like you, or are seeking to become leaders?
4. What leadership skills do you think are important for the *Ladies Who Launch* organization members should have in order to run a successful business?

APPENDIX H

FIELD OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Date: _____

Time: _____

Name of Company: _____

Event: _____

Location: _____

Number of people present: _____

Purpose	
Theme	
Environment	
What I See	
What I Hear	
Questions	

APPENDIX I

PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE *LADIES WHO LAUNCH* ORGANIZATION

July 21, 2007

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
University of San Francisco
2130 Fulton Street
San Francisco, CA 94117

Dear Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the *Ladies Who Launch* organization, I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Ms. Dorothy Raab, a student at USF. We are aware that Ms. Raab intends to conduct her research by administering a written survey to our local Chapter members in the form of an interview, along with informal field observations to their places of business. The members to be interviewed will be in the state of California, specifically in the San Francisco Bay Area.

I am the San Francisco Bay Area Director of this organization. I give Ms. Dorothy Raab permission to conduct her research in our organization.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office at 415.730.3159.

Sincerely,

Alice C.
San Francisco Bay Area Director
Ladies Who Launch organization

