

An Exploration of the Motivations and Expectation Gaps of Mompreneurs

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The purpose of this study is to explore the motivations and the nature and scope of the expectation gaps experienced by mompreneurs. An exploratory, qualitative study involving semi-structured interviews with 20 mompreneurs was undertaken. The results of the analysis indicate that mompreneurs are motivated by unique factors deemed “intrinsic” motivators. This exploratory research supports the existence of entrepreneurial expectation gaps and highlights the need for these expectation gaps to be explicitly considered in future entrepreneurial research. Limitations, applications for practice and theory and directions for future research are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have acknowledged women’s entrepreneurship as heterogeneous, whether it is in motivations, size and structure of organization, or in venture performance (Green & Cohen, 1995; Hughes, 2006; Jennings & Provorny Cash, 2006; Orser & Madill, 2006; Pardo-del-Val, 2010). Recent calls from entrepreneurial researchers have identified the need to understand the diversity that exists amongst women entrepreneurs (Caputo & Dolinsky, 1998; Loscocco & Smith-Hunter, 2004) and to allow them to voice their stories and explore their experiences in order to better understand their entrepreneurial realities (Mallon & Cohen, 2001; Hughes, 2006; Jennings & McDougald, 2007).

In response to these calls, this paper presents the findings from a qualitative, exploratory study of mompreneurs (women entrepreneurs who are also mothers). The purpose of the study was to develop an initial understanding of this subgroup of entrepreneurs and to extend entrepreneurial theory by illuminating the entrepreneurial expectation gap; the difference between an entrepreneur’s expectations for her business and the realities she faces, as it relates to mompreneurs. The premise is that although mompreneurs are a subset of women entrepreneurs, the very nature of their “motherhood” might contribute to the presence of gaps between their entrepreneurial expectations and the realities they face. Although the difference between women’s entrepreneurial expectations and realities has been alluded to (Schwartz, 1976; Lee-Gosselin & Grise, 1990; Holmquist & Carter, 2009), entrepreneurial studies to date have yet to specifically examine the gap in expectations. In doing so, this paper will provide researchers, educators and policy makers with a richer understanding of women’s entrepreneurship, thus enabling changes to further support, develop and foster this entrepreneurial group’s efforts to succeed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Expectancy Theory and Entrepreneurship

To understand the motivations of mompreneurs, we apply the effort-performance-outcome model (Gatewood, Shaver, Powers, & Gartner, 2002; Renko, Kroeck, & Bullough, 2011) of expectancy theory based on Vroom's work (1964). Expectancy theory (also referred to as VIE theory) predicts that an individual will act in a certain way because she believes that the act will be followed by a particular outcome (Renko et al., 2011). We propose that nascent mompreneurs will start business ventures because they believe this action will lead to desired outcomes for them personally and for their families.

The relationships between valence, instrumentality and expectancy help explain entrepreneurial motivation (Manolova, Brush, Edelman, & Shaver, 2012) and behavioural choices (Renko et al., 2011). Valence refers to the value that an individual places on the outcome, whereas instrumentality is interpreted as the belief that if one meets performance expectations, the outcome will be achieved. Lastly, expectancy is the subjective probability that the effort will lead to the outcome (Vroom, 1964; Renko et al., 2011; Manolova et al., 2012). Consistent with expectancy theory, we too hypothesize that mompreneurs will continue exerting the effort required to run their businesses so long as the positive relationship amongst valence, instrumentality and expectancy exists.

Entrepreneurial Expectancies

A number of studies have researched the formation of entrepreneurial expectancies (Gatewood et al., 2002; Wiklund, Davidsson, & Delmar, 2002; Manolova, Carter, Manev, & Gyoshev, 2007; Manolova et al., 2012), most often in the context of growth expectations. The combination of human capital, social capital, motivations and perceptions or beliefs has been used to understand the nature of entrepreneurial expectancy formation.

Manolova et al.'s 2007 study presented entrepreneurial growth expectancies as a function of human capital, social capital and perceived benefits from prior experience. Both Manolova et al. (2012) and Pinfeld (2001) explored the link between motivations and expectancy formation. Manolova et al.'s data suggested that women had a very different set of motivations for growing their firm than did men. The data also suggested that more highly educated, married women were less likely to intend to grow their new ventures. Manolova et al. proposed that because women have multiple motivations for starting their business, they have multiple reasons to persist and may be less likely to quit their businesses if the expected level of financial success was not achieved, hence a gap in expectations.

The 2002 study by Gatewood et al. related perceptions of skills and abilities, which they determined could be influenced by external feedback, to the formation of entrepreneurial expectations. The entrepreneurial self-efficacy (ESE) construct proposed by Chen et al. (1998), defined as the strength of a person's belief that she is capable of successfully performing the various roles and tasks of entrepreneurship, is another example of self-assessment that is related to instrumentality, intentions and behaviours.

Expectation Gaps

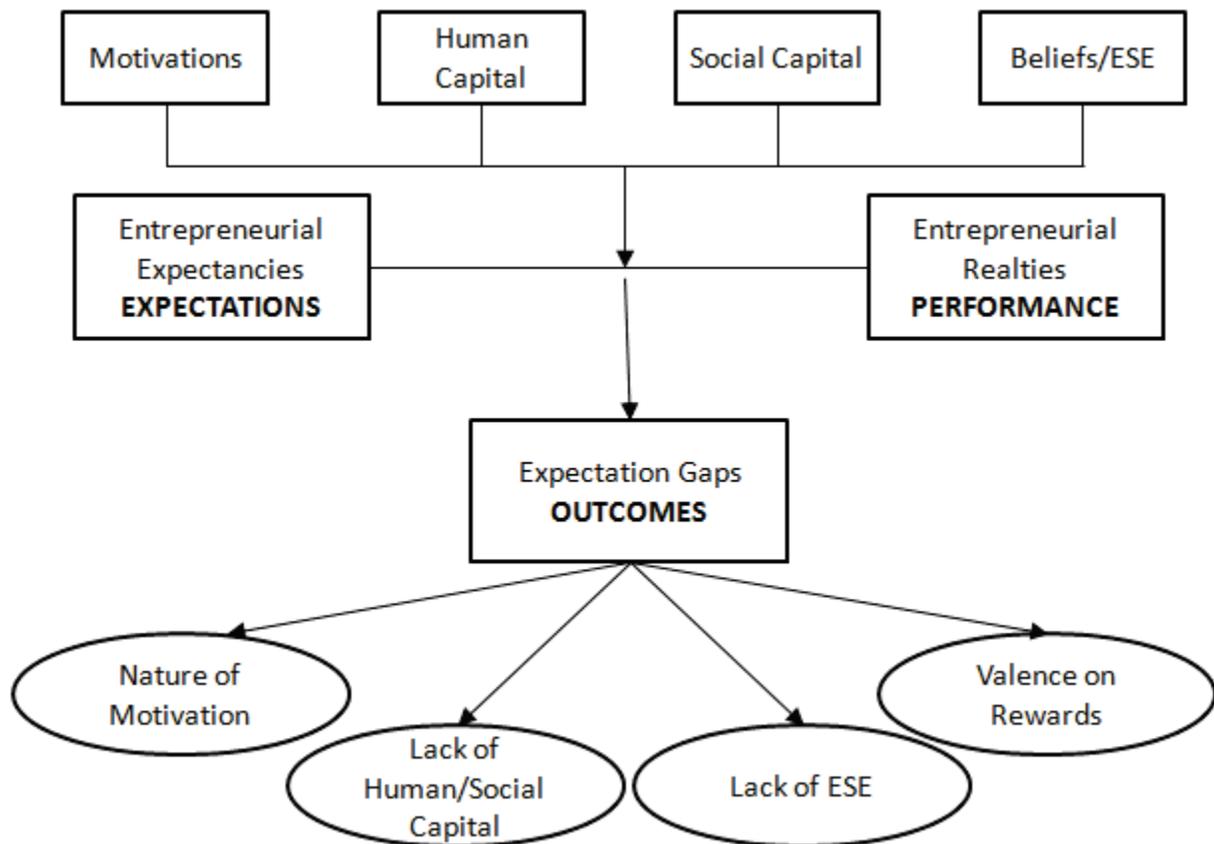
The difference between women's entrepreneurial expectations and their reality has been alluded to in a number of women entrepreneur studies. In one of the early, pioneering studies of women entrepreneurs, Schwartz (1976) identified that one of the biggest and most common mistakes of women entrepreneurs was in "underestimating the cost of business operation and marketing the product or service" (as cited in Holmquist & Carter, 2009, p.122). The term "underestimating" was used purposefully here, as the women were not oblivious to the costs and efforts involved, but were surprised by the difference between their expectations and the reality they actually faced. This finding was supported by Holmquist and Carter (2009) who identified that this same most common mistake was still an issue for women entrepreneurs in today's world. In addition, Lee-Gosselin and Grise (1990), who studied a group of 400 Québec City women owner-managers, concluded that the women's "lack of realism is striking," and noted specifically that this was "not ostrich" behaviour but rather an indicator of how important starting a business was for

some women entrepreneurs.” (Lee-Gosselin & Grise, 1990, p.426). Again, this suggests women entrepreneurs have a sense of what to expect as they embark upon their entrepreneurial journey, but are surprised when the reality they face differs from their expectations.

Interestingly, specific consideration of the difference between an entrepreneur’s expectations and the reality she faces has yet to be examined in depth in general entrepreneurial research. To our knowledge, no study to date has set about to specifically illuminate expectation gaps, despite the fact that understanding *if* the gaps exist, *where* and *why* gaps exist and *how* entrepreneurs manage to reconcile the gaps they face would be of great benefit to entrepreneurial researchers and practitioners alike. Developing a better understanding of these gaps would aid in educating and supporting entrepreneurs, which should assist in their overall success. Bringing attention to these gaps is also critical for researchers to re-evaluate their nomological nets and consider additional variables that might improve both the validity and generalizability of entrepreneurial theories and models alike. As a result, this study was designed to illuminate expectation gaps within a subset of women entrepreneurs, known as mompreneurs.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model we have developed to connect the factors related to the formation of entrepreneurial expectancies (expectations) and the entrepreneurial experience (performance) to our hypothesized explanations of the expectation gaps (outcomes).

FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF EXPECTATION GAPS



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MOMPREENEUR

Women's entrepreneurship in Canada has experienced considerable growth over the past two decades, increasing at an impressive rate of over 200% (Industry Canada, 2011). The most recent data available reports that majority women-owned small and medium enterprises (SMEs) brought in combined annual revenues of \$72 billion, representing approximately eight per cent of all revenues from Canada's SMEs (Carrington, 2004). Women have been venturing into self-employment at twice the rate of men (Carrington, 2004) and the most recent statistics indicate that approximately 951,000 women are self-employed in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2012a). According to a report from the Center for Women's Business Research (2006), one-woman businesses grew at twice the rate of all other businesses between 1997 and 2006. CIBC World Markets (2005) confirmed these findings in the Canadian context by identifying women sole proprietors as the fastest growing segment of the Canadian small business landscape (CIBC World Markets, 2005).

The growth in women's self-employment has been chronicled in an explosion of newspaper articles and books promoting and celebrating small business ownership, especially for women (Hughes, 2005). Women entrepreneurs who are also mothers have received a significant amount of this popular press attention (Barnes, 2005; Carniol, 2008; Mazurkewich, 2010); however, entrepreneurial academic research examining this distinct group of business owners remains underdeveloped. Brush et al.'s (2009) analysis of the academic publications in what they argue to be the two foremost mainstream academic entrepreneurial journals on women's entrepreneurship (*Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice* and the *Journal of Business Venturing*) revealed that very few articles dealt with motherhood themes.

"Motherhood" has been presented as a metaphor which represents the family context, and draws attention to the fact that this context may have a bigger impact on women than men (Jennings & McDougald, 2007). As such, being mothers in addition to women entrepreneurs suggests that mompreneurs may face some differing norms, values and societal expectations compared to other entrepreneurial groups, which could impact their success. According to Moore (2010), the increasing trend for mothers to enter into entrepreneurial ventures is partially related to unrealistic expectations of what a working mother should be and the accompanying guilt associated with not being able to meet those expectations. Moore concludes this combination has led many women to leave work environments to become stay-at-home moms during their children's preschool years. Becoming a mompreneur can be viewed as a solution to the demanding societal expectations women face with regards to raising children, running a smooth household, being a good wife, having a social life and being something other than a mom all the time (Will & Dehn, 2006).

The label "mompreneur" has been coined and applied to this group of women entrepreneurs. Nel, Maritz and Thongprovati (2010) give credit to Patricia Cobe and Ellen H. Parlapiano for conceptualizing the term over a decade ago. In 2006, The Mompreneur® magazine was launched by a group of Calgary women who had started meeting to share information and network. There are now numerous entrepreneurial mom networking and support websites across the country including Entrepreneurial Moms International™, Momcafé, and Mom 2 Mom Toronto, for example. Korsgaard (2007) concluded that mompreneurship has probably always been around but is now emerging as an interesting social phenomenon.

The definition of mompreneur is as diverse as the women who create and own these ventures. According to The Mompreneur® magazine and Mom Entrepreneurs Network, a mompreneur is a woman who is balancing the role of motherhood with being an entrepreneur. This differs widely from other sources including MompreneursOnline.com who define mompreneurs as women entrepreneurs who are work-at-home moms. The criteria for entering Canadian Savvymom's Mom Entrepreneur of the Year Award specifies that the woman entering the contest be the founder of a business after becoming a mother and it was likely that this mom was inspired by a gap in the marketplace she discovered. Finally, the definition provided by Rayworth (2006), states that mompreneurs focus entirely on their own demographic, selling products designed for babies, children and hip moms. For the purposes of this study,

a mompreneur is defined as a woman who had at least one child at the time of business start up and who is the owner of at least 50% of the business.

No matter how one defines the term mompreneur, the movement is exploding in Canada (Waisberg, n.d.). The opportunity to better balance family and work (Brown et al., 2002); the emergence of an “enterprising culture” in Canada, sparking women’s interest in starting their own business (Hughes, 1999); better access to startup capital (Carniol, 2008); technological innovations providing the means to market products and services from home; and rising education levels (Singh & Lucas, 2005) have all contributed to the rise in mompreneurship in Canada. As a result, research examining this distinct and growing group of mother entrepreneurs is essential to further develop entrepreneurial theory and to inform policy makers of crucial supports necessary to help these ventures succeed.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The presentation of Canadian mompreneur success stories is now common place among leading news publications. For example, Sandra Wilson, crowned the original mompreneur (Shiffman & McElgunn, 2009), is a celebrated figure in the mompreneur community in Canada. Wilson founded her company, Robeez, when her son was only 18-months old in the hopes of being able to spend more time with him and earn an income. Robeez grew from the basement of Wilson’s home to a multi-million dollar enterprise that was purchased by shoe giant Stride Rite in 2006 (Van Den Broek, 2006).

The achievements of Wilson and other successful mompreneurs can serve to provide inspiration to nascent and established mompreneurs alike. The downside of highlighting these positive stories is that undertaking an entrepreneurial venture while raising a family is not as easy as it is portrayed through the popular media. According to Will and von Dehn (2006), the happy medium between being a full-time mother and a dedicated career woman does not really exist. In fact, these two experienced mompreneurs call the quest for balance a flat out lie. With our research questions at the forefront, we began our investigation to uncover the motivations and the nature and scope of the expectation gaps experienced by mompreneurs.

METHOD

The overwhelmingly positivist approach to conducting entrepreneurial research has resulted in questions related to the appropriateness of such research techniques (Brush et al., 2009) in fostering our ability to develop a rich understanding of entrepreneurial realities. In addition, the exploratory nature of the questions posed in this study support the use of qualitative research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). For these reasons, it was deemed appropriate that we begin our exploratory study by interviewing mompreneurs. The use of in-depth interviews enabled the researchers to “gain insights and understanding of complex, sensitive issues or very personal topics” (Orhan & Scott, 2001, p.233).

Interviews with 20 mompreneurs whose businesses were located in southern Ontario between the Greater Toronto Area and London, Ontario were conducted. As previously noted, for the purpose of this study, we defined a mompreneur as a woman who had at least one child at the time of business start up and who is the owner of at least 50% of the business. All participants had been mompreneurs for a period of one year or longer and all had a major managerial role in their venture. In addition, participants all had businesses that were six years or younger at the time of the interview in order to minimize the effects of retrospective recall difficulties (Kirkwood & Tootell, 2008).

The sample was constructed through personal contacts, identification through various publications and referrals from the participants themselves. Potential subjects were contacted and informed of the study and its purpose. For those who agreed to participate, personal and business information was collected through a self-completed background questionnaire. Confidential personal interviews were conducted in person and lasted from 40 minutes to one and a half hours. Each interview was recorded with the permission of the interviewee and transcribed.

The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed the interviewer to pose additional and probing questions as necessary in order to follow the mompreneurs' expression of her experience. The topics in the interviews included motivations for starting the business; use of business planning techniques; comparisons of initial expectations to the realities faced; obstacles to growth; supports to manage conflict; as well as long-term plans. The QSR NUD*IST Vivo (NVivo) software package was used to manage and analyze the data which allowed for coding according to themes as well as swift and thorough searches.

DESCRIPTION OF SAMPLE

Profiles

As Appendix 1 demonstrates, the socio-demographic profile of the 20 participants revealed the average age was 38 years and that 95% were married with two children. The majority had children under 10 years old at the time of start up with 45% of the participants parenting children of preschool age (under five years old) at that time. The sample was well educated with 90% having completed a post-secondary degree. Roughly two-thirds of the participants had completed a university bachelor or graduate degree. Twenty per cent of the participants indicated their major of study when last in school was in the field of business or management. Participants had worked in a range of industries prior to becoming self-employed with an average of 12 years of full-time and six years of part-time work experience. Twenty per cent had previous entrepreneurial experience and 35% had a spouse with entrepreneurial experience.

As Appendix 2 demonstrates, the average age of the venture was three years with 70% reporting the primary location of the business inside the home. This finding is consistent with the Singh and Lucas (2005) sample but greater than the sample reported by Hughes (2003) which revealed approximately 44% of participants were operating a home-based business. The nature of the business operations were wide ranging with almost two-thirds in industries outside of traditional female occupational sectors including education, health, finance and business services (Carter & Marlow, 2007). The majority of businesses were engaged in "less traditional" activities including manufacturing, product design, sales, online publishing and retail operations.

Financial Need

Seventy per cent of the participants revealed their total household income was \$100,000 or more. Available data from Statistics Canada (2012b) reports that the average total income of two parent families with children ranges from \$73,700 for one earner to \$104,000 for two earners. Total household income, combined with the data showing over 60% of the businesses contributed less than 20% to the overall household income, suggests financial need was not a significant motivator for the majority of participants.

Supports

All of the participants credited some form of support for enabling them to take on the challenge of starting their own business. The supports mentioned most frequently included spouse (85%), family (65%), outsourcing (60%) and working fragmented hours (45%). Just under half (45%) of the participants worked to some degree with their spouse on their business. For some, this meant equal ownership in the business (10%), while for others this meant lending specific skills required by the business (35%). These skills ranged from technical and design support to customer interaction and sales. Other supports utilized included business partner, business or life coach, friends, household and domestic help, networking group and technology.

Long-Term Plans

The growth intentions reported by the participants ranged drastically from being satisfied in the present state, to a desire to grow big enough to be an attractive takeover target, to being unsure of what direction to follow. Nine participants (45%) cited a personal preference for managed growth as an obstacle to the growth of their businesses. In the majority of cases this preference originated from a desire

to be available to meet the needs of their children. One of these participants relates her preference for growth to her initial motivations:

I think that the obstacle for us to do that is because that's not why we started it. We didn't start it so we could be so crazy busy and getting tons of money. We started it so we could earn a bit of an income and be there with my dad and my mom. They need us now especially. And I'm here for my kids.

None of the participants from our study reported plans to return to paid employment in the near future. Thirty per cent reported they would consider returning to paid employment under certain circumstances but the other 70% indicated they had no plans to return to paid employment, as demonstrated by this mompreneur:

I hope not. I really hope not. That actually is a fuel for me to be on the phone and make sales calls. I love what I'm doing, there are days where it's hard but I love it and I don't want to go back to work for someone.

A number of participants reported earning less as an entrepreneur than they would have if they had remained employed. Despite this gap, none of the participants reported the desire to return to paid employment for financial benefit. One mompreneur shares her rationale for staying the course as an entrepreneur:

But I love it and there's no looking back. It's tons of work and I'm not making the income that I made as a financial planner but it's the most gratifying thing because the decisions that I make, the results of it are because of my decisions. So you learn a lot of right and wrong and sometimes you have to take the punches and realize you made your mistakes and when something does go right, it's the most exhilarating thing. And you've got to love what you're doing.

RESULTS

Motivations

A number of studies have examined women's motivations for becoming entrepreneurs (Buttner & Moore, 1997; DeMartino & Barbato, 2003; Hughes, 2003; Hughes, 2006; Sullivan, Forret, Mainiero, & Terjesen, 2007; Manolova, Brush, & Edelman, 2008; Kirkwood, 2009; Nagarajan, Blanco, & LeBrasseur, 2009; Orhan & Scott, 2001). Buttner and Moore's (1997) study concluded that the most important motivators for women to become entrepreneurs were the desire for challenge and for balancing family and work obligations. DeMartino and Barbato (2003) also found women entrepreneurs were highly motivated by family/lifestyle preferences and married women with dependents ranked family/lifestyle motivators much higher than married and single women without dependents. Kirkwood's (2009) recent work found women were more motivated by family-related factors including the desire for work-family balance than were men.

On the other hand, Hughes (2006), Kirkwood (2009) and Nagarajan et al. (2009) found the most prevalent motivators for women entrepreneurs were a combination of what Hughes has categorized as "classic" entrepreneurial motivators. These include the desire for independence and control, the need for challenge, improved financial opportunity, and the identification of a business opportunity.

Much of the literature on motivation reveals the decision for a woman to start an entrepreneurial venture involves a system of interacting motivations (Brush, 1990; Green & Cohen, 1995; Orhan & Scott, 2001). The motivators are described as complex (Buttner & Moore, 1997) and multifaceted (Mallon & Cohen, 2001; Patterson & Mavin, 2009). During the interview process, participants revealed the many

factors that served as motivation for starting their own ventures. All participants mentioned at least two factors and some mentioned as many as five. Table 1 presents a summary of the motivation analysis results. Our study of mompreneurs revealed the most often mentioned motivators were financial (45%), dissatisfaction (40%) and the desire to pursue a market opportunity (35%). We classified these factors according to the categories set forward by Hughes (2006) into classic, work-family and forced.

TABLE 1
MOTIVATION ANALYSIS

Motivator	# of Times Mentioned	% Mentioned	Classification
Financial	9	45%	Classic
Dissatisfaction	8	40%	Forced
Market Opportunity	7	35%	Classic
Stay at Home	6	30%	Work-Family
Skills to Use	5	25%	Intrinsic
Flexibility	4	20%	Work-Family
Something for Me	5	25%	Intrinsic
Something to Do	4	20%	Intrinsic
Be At Home	2	10%	Work-Family
Challenge	2	10%	Classic
Health Issues	2	10%	Forced
Own Something	2	10%	Classic
Something for Children	2	10%	Intrinsic
To Help People	2	10%	Intrinsic
Control	1	5%	Classic
Independence	1	5%	Classic
More Time	1	5%	Work-Family
Own Boss	1	5%	Classic
Stability	1	5%	Forced

Classic motivators included the desire for independence and control, the need for challenge, improved financial opportunity, the identification of a business opportunity, the appeal of having something to own and finally the desire to become one's own boss. Work-family motivators included the desire to either stay at home or be at home, flexibility and to have more time. Forced motivators included dissatisfaction with previous job or work-family circumstances, health issues and the desire for more stability.

Interestingly, our study also uncovered a number of factors that did not fit into the previously defined three broad groups of motivators. These additional factors included the desire to put specific skills to use, to do something "just for me", to do something, to create something for their children or to help other people. These factors form a fourth category which could be broadly labeled intrinsic motivators. These findings are supported by Lee-Gosselin and Grise (1990) and Manolova et al. (2012) who also identified that women entrepreneurs were motivated by other unique factors including the desire to have something to call their own, to express themselves, to create jobs for members of their family and to have a better quality of life.

In our study, the work-family category of motivators was found to be less important than the classic and intrinsic categories. Our study revealed that the most important category of motivators for

mompreneurs was classic, which included 35% of the responses. This result is consistent with Hughes' 2006 finding that the majority of women entrepreneurs fit into the classic motivation category. However, our study presents a new category of motivators not identified in Hughes' work. The intrinsic category of motivators was important for over a quarter (28%) of the mompreneurs in our study.

Expectation Gaps

To develop a sense of how well prepared mompreneurs were for the challenge of balancing their new venture alongside family responsibilities, we asked each participant to identify the factor that surprised her the most related to starting her business. A wide range of responses were recorded from astonishment over how much could actually be charged for services, to the difficulties marketing the business and finding the right staff, to how unexpectedly fulfilling the decision has been. The most commonly mentioned surprise related to time, which was cited by eight (40%) participants.

The responses indicated expectation gaps existed, so we delved deeper to explore these gaps more thoroughly. In order to understand the nature and scope of the expectation gaps, seven categories were explored including growth, financing, compensation, hours of work, skills needs, childcare needs, and networking participation. The gaps were classified as high, medium or low from a combination of participant responses and the researchers' interpretation. In our assessment, the high and medium gaps were combined as both of these were deemed to be considerable and worth noting. Table 2 presents a summary of these results.

**TABLE 2
EXPECTATION GAPS**

	Growth	Financing	Compensation	Hours of Work	Skills	Childcare	Networking
High	7 (35%)	8 (40%)	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	4 (20%)
Medium	8 (40%)	8 (40%)	9 (45%)	8 (40%)	9 (45%)	1 (5%)	8 (40%)
Low	3 (15%)	4 (20%)	8 (40%)	7 (35%)	10 (50%)	13 (65%)	7 (35%)
High + Medium	15 (75%)	16 (80%)	12 (60%)	12 (60%)	10 (50%)	6 (30%)	12 (60%)

Biggest Gaps: Financing, Growth, Compensation, Hours of Work & Networking

The financing needs category was reported as the largest gap, followed closely by growth expectations. This is consistent with Schwartz's (1976) finding that the greatest common mistake of women entrepreneurs is underestimating the cost of business operations and marketing efforts. Only one (5%) of the participants who had identified financing as a large gap had prepared a formal business plan whereas two of seven participants who reported the growth gap as high wrote a plan. Overall, only 30% of the participants wrote a formal business plan; however many reported preparing some version of an informal plan. This statistic is low compared to Singh and Lucas' (2005) sample of homemaker and non-homemaker nascent entrepreneurs where approximately 60% of both types of entrepreneurs completed business plans for their new ventures. One mompreneur explains why she and her partner did not write a formal plan:

Truthfully it was one of those things, and I'm sure that all entrepreneurs go through this, we just said, oh my gosh...we're going to make a million dollars in the first year and we did it, not the million dollars part but we did the business and we never took a step back. Like we did forecasts and projections and if we're making this many sales and this is our expenses and this is what we're making, this is what we're paying staff, and we did. I wouldn't consider it a formal business plan. Like there were cocktail napkins that we

scribbled on and, um, we just never felt it was necessary but we probably would be further than we are today had we done that.

Another participant reflects on the decision not to write a plan and the consequence to her business:

The biggest mistake was I didn't do a formal business plan. After all I've been taught. I sort of had like a mini PowerPoint presentation and you know a few things but I kind of...so we kind of just did things one off, and it ended up being pretty costly for us.

Of the seven participants who identified growth as a large gap, five reported that growth was in fact higher than expected. This mompreneur shares her surprise by the growth of her venture:

I know it's not usual for a small business to start that way but yeah, it, it was like, it's taken off 100% more than we ever dreamed. We thought by now we would have a few schools running fundraisers and maybe a couple local stores. But we've got 60 plus stores across Canada. And, it's just; I think that's why the media jumped on it because it got so big so fast. And we had no idea.

A number of the participants who reported high and medium compensation gaps took solace in the fact that even though they were not able to draw the level of compensation they desired, their businesses were generally self-sustaining. Those who reported low compensation gaps indicated the reason was because they had received information from other entrepreneurs (friends, family, and acquaintances) that helped paint a clearer picture of what they could expect to draw from their new businesses. This mompreneur explains how a conversation with an acquaintance helped her set her compensation expectations:

And so I knew because she was like six or seven years into it, ten years, whatever, and she was barely taking money out. Like she really had said to me, five to seven years. You kind of don't really want to believe it cause you're like, oh no my idea is better. And you know really, it does take five to seven years I believe.

For many participants, the hours of work invested in the business on a regular basis was different, in a negative way, from initial expectations. Fragmenting hours of work in order to accommodate family demands was a common strategy reported by close to half of the mompreneurs. One mompreneur compares the time demands of her business to having a baby:

That was definitely the biggest gap. I had no idea. It's like a baby. You think you have control over how much time you're going to spend, and really you don't. And um, you know, you think you think you're going to put them to sleep and go on vacation. I have taken one full day of vacation in almost five years, and that was my birthday, this year, because I just hired an assistant, in January. So you know that is not what regular people do. Regular people don't like sit in their cars when they are camping with their kids because there is wireless internet by the water and work. It's not normal, you know? And um, I think that would probably be the hugest gap for me.

In respect to the sizable networking gap reported, participants tended to fall into one of two groups. There were those who did not expect to spend the amount of time that they actually were networking and then there were those who expected to do much more but, usually due to time constraints, had not been able to put in the effort. One mompreneur describes the lengths she has gone to in order to network and market her business:

Like I said, I never thought that over 50% of my time would be spent on marketing which I call networking, right? And you know there's just no way I realized just, even if it's like, I remember one summer I was nominated for mom entrepreneur of the year award [name removed to preserve confidentiality] right? And I was out walking the dogs in the morning with a stack of business cards in my little dog pouch and I would be talking up everybody right? And every time I saw them - have you voted yet? Did you win? And going to the gym in the spinning class I'd be like can I take a minute at the end of class. Can you vote for me? Just stupid things like that. Like I said, I have a big mouth. But you know if you don't do it nobody's going to do it for you.

Smaller Gaps: Childcare Needs & Skills Required

The participants utilized a range of childcare strategies in an attempt to manage their many demands. These included full or part-time daycare outside of the home, school attendance, care inside the home, occasional to regular help from family and hiring a nanny. The majority of the mompreneurs identified the childcare needs gap as low and most did not change their existing childcare strategies at the time they launched their businesses. This mompreneur reflects on her current childcare situation and how it may need to change in the future:

Childcare, I don't think it's changed much. I think originally I had thought I am just going to squeeze it in wherever I can. They are going to go to bed, and they're in bed fairly early and I am going to have the night and the weekends and that is pretty much how it stayed. I am starting to realize that if I want to grow it a bit more and do more things with it, I am going to really put a plan in place.

Another mompreneur, who identified her childcare needs gap as medium, initially planned to care for her three young children at home when she and her husband launched their business. She decided to make a change:

A year and a half, about a year and a half, we realized that it wasn't working anymore. The business was starting to get really busy and, we were getting frustrated with the kids at home because we realized that we weren't getting done what we wanted to get done.

The skills gap was documented as low for many of the participants. Two distinct strategies emerged as participants revealed their preferences. One strategy identified was to outsource or hire people who had the skills needed or expertise required to do the job if the mompreneur herself was not capable. This mompreneur shares her thoughts:

You know what I've done is find people to fill gaps. And that's what I tell other mompreneurs to do. You know what your best thing right off the bat is to recognize your strengths and fill in the gaps with your weaknesses because like I knew right off my background is not accounting, it is not math, it is not financials. So I needed someone to be, you know, carrying on that.

A participant who had not outsourced explains why she is hesitant to engage in this strategy:

I do everything. I believe you kind of have to. I believe that if you can't run your own business from the ground up...fine once you grow, to delegate. But if you can't do everything yourself, it's not maybe, like what happens if you hire a web person and they quit or they disappear or they move, who's going to, I believe you have to be able to do everything to succeed. I do.

DISCUSSION

This paper presents an exploration of the motivations of mompreneurs and a first attempt at examining *if* expectation gaps exist and *what* those gaps are. The results from our study demonstrate that the motivations of mompreneurs are multifaceted and complex. Although mompreneurs are most often motivated by “classic” factors, they are also highly motivated by “intrinsic” factors including the desire to put their skills to use, to have something just for them or their children, and to help people.

The data also shows that mompreneurs do experience expectation gaps and that they are largest in the areas of financing needs, growth, compensation, hours of work and networking expectations. We have added to the conceptual model introduced by Manolova et al. (2007) by proposing that motivations and beliefs/ESE also impact the formation of entrepreneurial expectations and the entrepreneurial experience (running the business). We hypothesized that the resulting expectation gaps are a function of the nature of the motivations, lack of human/social capital, lack of ESE and the level of valence placed on the outcomes.

The data from the present study supports Manolova et al.’s (2012) proposition that the presence of multiple motivators for starting their businesses gives women entrepreneurs many reasons to persist even if their expectations are not being met. This may explain the continued operation of these mompreneur businesses despite large gaps in growth, compensation and hours of work expectations. Similarly, Renko et al.’s (2011) finding that those whose valence stems from what we have labeled “intrinsic” motivators spend significantly more time working on their startups than those with other kinds of motivational profiles is evidenced in our data.

The lack of human/social capital in the areas of entrepreneurial experience (personal or spousal), business planning activities and inclusion in social networks (mentoring or otherwise) appear to be part of the cause for the expectation gaps of mompreneurs in all seven categories. Only a third of the mompreneurs had personal or spousal past entrepreneurial experience to draw upon, only 30% prepared business plans, and less than half reported having a mentor or advisor.

Different levels of valence placed on various outcomes helps explain the existence of expectation gaps. For example, the compensation expectation gap was high and many mompreneurs reported earning less than when they were employed. This did not cause the mompreneurs to cease operation of their ventures. “Gratifying” and “exhilarating” were terms used to describe the outcome of their entrepreneurial efforts. Clearly the valence placed on these personal growth objectives outweighed those placed on financial or growth performance.

IMPLICATIONS

Our work has implications for theory and practice. In terms of theory, our work extends entrepreneurial theory by identifying that expectation gaps do exist, and thus must be explicitly considered in future research efforts to develop a deeper, richer understanding of entrepreneurial efforts and outcomes. In addition, our work contributes to a growing literature on the heterogeneity amongst female entrepreneurs, and focuses explicitly on the women *and* mothers group known as mompreneurs. We also responded to the recent calls for new research approaches that foster our ability to develop a rich understanding of entrepreneurial realities (Brush et al., 2009) by utilizing a qualitative, exploratory research approach.

In terms of implications for practice, the impact of developing an understanding of the expectation gaps in entrepreneurs, male and female alike, may be significant. Practitioners, educators and policy makers may learn where education, information and supports may require more attention to ensure entrepreneurs are better prepared to embark upon entrepreneurial ventures, thus increasing the likelihood of success.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Though the current study provides some interesting insights about mompreneurs and support for a greater need to explicitly consider the expectation gaps, there are some limitations worth noting. First, due to the qualitative, exploratory nature of the study, we are unable to make generalizations based on these results. Further exploration to address why these gaps occur and how they affect success would be fruitful avenues to further develop an understanding of the roots and the impact of these gaps in mompreneurial ventures. In addition, exploring the expectation gaps in other entrepreneurial contexts would also lend validity to the existence and importance of these gaps in general entrepreneurial efforts.

Second, a major limitation results from the limited sample of mompreneurs (numbering 20). Though we appeared to reach the point of theoretical saturation in our interview process (the final four interviews were clearly repeating what we had previously heard), it is possible that some gaps were not identified and more mompreneur interviews may reveal new findings.

Third, the fact that the mompreneurs interviewed were all succeeding with their ventures may be a limiting factor. It is possible that the expectation gaps are also an important factor in *unsuccessful* mompreneurial ventures, and this was not possible to consider given the sample selected for this study. It would be of great value to interview unsuccessful entrepreneurs and mompreneurs to compare their expectation gaps with those found amongst successful entrepreneurs as this might illuminate some specific contributions to entrepreneurial failure.

Many research opportunities also follow from this research. Empirical research would be helpful in further developing and evaluating the role that these expectation gaps play in entrepreneurial ventures. There are numerous entrepreneurial groups that can be examined using this perspective. Individuals in a variety of social contexts will have differing expectations, and therefore differing gaps, and exploring the range of gaps and their relationship with context will enable the development of a richer, fuller understanding of the entrepreneurial experience.

CONCLUSION

Developing an understanding of the difference between the expectations and the realities entrepreneurs face is critical to understanding entrepreneurship in general, and mompreneurs are an important and distinct group of entrepreneurs who are yet to be studied in the academic entrepreneurial literature. This exploratory research supports the existence of entrepreneurial expectation gaps and highlights the need for expectation gaps to be explicitly considered in future entrepreneurial research. This first step contributes to our understanding of how mompreneurs experience this expectation gap.

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APPENDIX 1
PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

	Mean	n	%
Age	38.4 years		
Marital Status			
Married		19	95%
Divorced		1	5%
Number of Children at Start Up	1.9 years		
Age of Children at Start Up			
< 5 years		9	45%
6 – 10 years		8	40%
10 years and older		3	15%
Total Household Income			
\$50,000 and under		3	15%
\$50,001 - \$99,999		3	15%
\$100,000 - \$149,999		9	45%
\$150,001 and greater		5	25%
Highest Level of Education Completed			
High School		2	10%
College Diploma		5	25%
University Undergraduate Degree		8	40%
University Graduate Degree		5	25%
Major of Study When Last in School			
Business		4	20%
Psychology		3	15%
Social Sciences		4	20%
Other		9	45%
Taken Courses on Starting a Business			
Yes		2	10%
No		18	90%
Years of Full Time Work Prior to Starting Business	12.4 years		
Years of Part Time Work Prior to Starting Business	6.0 years		
Industry of Employment Prior to Starting Business			
Banking, Finance & Insurance		5	25%
Education & Social Work		4	20%
Healthcare		2	10%
Professional Services		3	15%
Other		6	30%

**APPENDIX 2
BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS**

	Mean	n	%
Age of Business	3.0 years	20	
Wrote a Business Plan Prior to Starting Business			
Yes		6	30%
No		14	70%
Nature of Business			
Manufacturing & Sales		2	10%
Online Community & Publishing		3	15%
Product Design & Sales		5	25%
Retail		3	15%
Service		7	35%
Primary Location of Business			
Inside the Home		14	70%
Outside the Home		6	30%
Form of Ownership			
Corporation		10	50%
Partnership		2	10%
Sole Proprietorship		8	40%
Annual Sales			
Under \$10,000		2	10%
\$10,000 - \$49,999		7	35%
\$50,000 - \$99,999		1	5%
\$100,000 - \$149,999		1	5%
Over \$150,000		9	45%
Number of Employees	4.2		
Percentage of Family Income Provided by Business			
Under 20%		10	63%
20% to 50%		3	19%
51% to 75%		1	6%
Over 76%		2	13%