

MOTIVATIONS OF MOMPREENEURS

MOTIVATIONS OF MOMPREENEURS IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES:
A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The phenomenon of the mompreneur, a woman who starts an independent business after childbirth, is a more recent facet of the business world, yet occurring more frequently in the changing economy. The traditional entrepreneurial motivations have been studied for many years, and this research study looks at the unique motivations of women who choose to start a business venture after motherhood. This subset of entrepreneurs has been found to be unique in their brain chemistry (Hoekzema et al., 2017) as well as in their shifting role conflicts and identity formation (Croom & Miller, 2018), and an interpretive phenomenological research method was employed to further discover the push and pull motivations of this distinctive subset of entrepreneurs in the United States. A phenomenological study employing the method of semi-structured interviews found that each participant was motivated by both push and pull factors. Pull factors included an internal personal desire for success and identity, entrepreneurship, and motherhood; and push factors included feeling the need to start a business by organizational priorities not aligning with the needs of the family and flexibility with one's daily schedule. The overall findings also supported that the desire and unconscious need for identity synthesis, or alignment of the conflicting identity of *mother* and *worker*, was found to be a motivating factor for all participants.

Keywords: Mompreneur, entrepreneur, mompreneurship, motivation, motherhood, push and pull motivations

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As a female child of the 1980s, my parents, teachers, and Marlo Thomas (1987) informed me that I was free to be anything I wanted to be: a doctor, a lawyer, a successful businesswoman. It was also of the utmost importance that I be a nurturing, caring mother as the world and society around me instilled that as a female that both of these things can and should be true. Time and reality moved on, and university classes began forays into different career choices and moved into Graduate School and more developed career choices. It became apparent that with only 24 hours in the day, seven days in the week, and 365 days in the year that the ability to be all the things successfully comes at robbing one of time and attention in order to fuel the other. And with that figurative robbing of Peter to pay Paul comes the discomfort of not adhering to both society and one's own ingrained expectation of what it means to be a success.

Motherhood became a primary focus after I had settled into a career earned by clinical hours with clients and patients, as well as office hours, giving 10- or 11-hour days, nights, and some weekends in order to secure a space at an organization that supports my family financially. Yet this felt like an uphill battle, borrowing hours that could be spent with the family in order to further a fulfilling career and also sacrificing organizational needs to be present for the family that I love. As the drive for personal and professional growth grew, I noticed that the drive to be a present and nurturing mother also grew, and the question was formed: how does one achieve both of these things and do them well in a world where it is felt as though 100% of the self is required of both work and motherhood? The motivation for my own identity synthesis in finding success in both work and motherhood drew me to devote my doctoral research into how other mothers have found motivation after having a child to find success in both work and home and

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thus possibly achieving the once seemingly unattainable dream of being anything you want and also a nurturing and present mother.

Entrepreneurial ventures have long been a specific facet of the organizational world, as they are the seed that, when sowed with time, ingenuity, and success, will blossom into the larger organizations that are known the world over (Kim, 2020). Countries across the globe over the years have provided a multitude of research on the generalized entrepreneurial prototype and what internal and external variables come together to deliver success (e.g., Ardichvili et al., 2003; Solesvik et al., 2019). Through rapidly changing societal opportunities, there are now specific types of entrepreneurs that have their own unique qualities that allow them to engage in entrepreneurial ventures. One of these entrepreneurial types is a mompreneur. Mompreneurship is a newer term, defined as an independent business venture started by a mother after childbirth. The term first appeared in the book, *Mompreneurs: A Mother's Practical Step-by-Step Guide to Work-at-Home Success* by Patricia Cobe and Ellen Parlapiano in 1996 (Krueger, 2015). The specificity of this specialized group of entrepreneurs offers ample opportunity for research into the unique motivators that contribute to a mompreneurial venture.

Mompreneurship is a global occurrence. Some statistics place mother-owned businesses at 33% of United States (U.S.) small business ventures, generating 3 trillion dollars worldwide (<http://prnewswire.com>, 2018). The research on the topic of mother entrepreneurs is somewhat limited in breadth, as the term and phenomena are more recent. Yet, there is also enough research to provide a stable foundation for this research project to expand upon. Previous literature from non-US countries has shown that mompreneurs possess distinct motivators and nuanced thinking strategies that are exclusive to the mompreneur (Foley et al., 2018), and this

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qualitative exploration into US-based mompreneurs expands upon this research from a Western United States perspective.

Mompreneurship is a continuing phenomenon, and some go so far as to claim that having children increases the likelihood that women will become self-employed (Foley et al., 2018). Economic reports show that mother-run businesses are making a huge economic impact in the world and are continuing to grow in numbers (<http://www.prnewswire.com>, 2018; Sheperd, 2020). There is a marked lack of research on this specific entrepreneurial niche, specifically in the United States, yet the economic and social impact will continue to build, as the data suggests (Ludovico, 2017). This research project offers a unique perspective of collecting data on US-based mompreneurs, with the hope to help to support the future of mother-lead business, as data has shown these ventures will only grow (Ludovico, 2017). Females make up just under half of the world's population (2020 statistics from <http://www.worldbank.org>), and motherhood is a choice many women make, and at times not a choice. This study contributes to the growing opinion that having a child does not stop a woman's career trajectory but may accelerate it in unique ways.

The male influence on research on the topic of entrepreneurial business is addressed by Yeager (2015) in a 200 year-spanning literature review of how including women-based language in business "changes everything." Yeager goes on to say that "as a young scholar navigating the two male-dominated sub-disciplines of business and economic history, I ran across the writings of a number of female professionals who demonstrated that when women theorize, things change" (Yeager, 2015, p. 764). This is echoed in the more recent work of Ludovico (2017), who researched women entrepreneurs and found that few identify as entrepreneurs, in part due to the lack of literature representation and female entrepreneurial role models (p. 487). These works

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support this researcher's continuing research on the mompreneur as it provides more data and diversifies the conversation on the male-dominated topic of entrepreneurship and helps fill the needed gap of research on US-based mother-created entrepreneurial ventures.

Problem Statement

Mompreneurs are a unique and specific cohort as they are members of two distinct groups: mothers and entrepreneurs. Previous research on entrepreneurial subjects has found that entrepreneurs have specifically defined motivations, thinking strategies, and personality traits attributed to the entrepreneurial mind (Ardichvili et al., 2003). In traditional entrepreneurial motivation literature, there are specific motivators such as the need for achievement, desire for independence, and drive; yet the majority of empirical studies on entrepreneurial motivation are based on samples of male entrepreneurs (Solesvik et al., 2019). The previous studies tend to have a population that is "typically over 35 years old, male, white, highly educated, and with degrees in business and economics" (Kerr et al., 2019). Research has supported differences in male and female motivation, such as Buttner and Moore's (1997) findings that females tend to find motivation in self-fulfillment and goal achievement, rather than the traditional male entrepreneurial motivator of perceived success and profitability, and this research explored if the inclusion of motherhood further differentiates the entrepreneurial motivations. There have been no United States-based studies found on identified mompreneur motivations and how they compare or contrast to the previously supported entrepreneurial motivations. This research on this group offers data that describes specific motivations of mompreneurs, as well as adds a new cultural perspective. Female-based research on the unique topic of mother-started business is a gap in current research, and this research addresses that gap.

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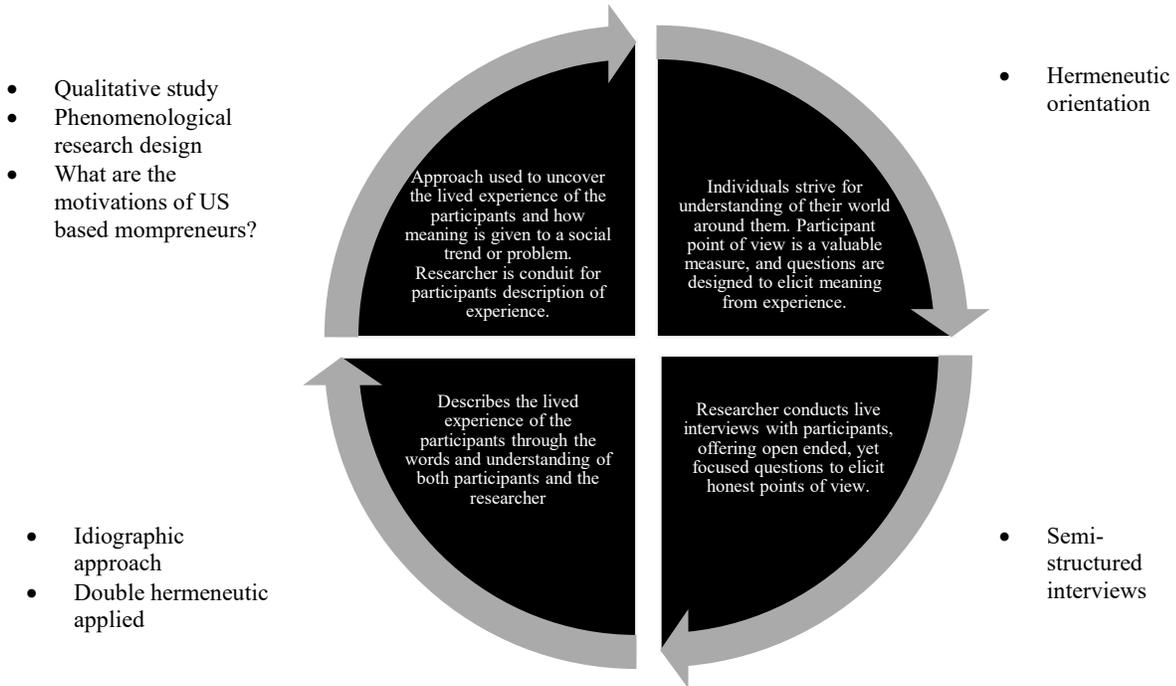
Conceptual Model

The conceptual model of this qualitative research project explored mompreneur motivation to determine the unique motivations of the US-based mompreneur. In this research project, mompreneur is specifically defined as a woman starting an independent business venture after childbirth. The research study provided new information on the topic of US-based mompreneurship and provided data for a discussion comparing and contrasting mompreneur motivations with the traditionally male-dominated entrepreneurial assessments.

An interpretive phenomenological analysis qualitative design was used with a theoretical orientation that applies a hermeneutic approach (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The hermeneutics approach is concerned with how one makes meaning of one's experience in the world and then attempting to understand one's experience through a double hermeneutic, creating a dynamic process of interpretation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The collection of defined motivation was done through a semi-structured interview format with specific and open-ended questions asked to participants. The main theme of the questions posed to participants was: "*What motivated you to begin a business after motherhood?*" While this question had some leading tendencies through the inclusion of the phrase "*after motherhood,*" this phrase was included to elicit participants to answer in relation to their mompreneur venture. Data were interpreted using a double hermeneutic with an idiographic approach where meaning is derived from each individual participant, then an interpretation of that meaning and themes are presented through an analysis of the qualitative data collected (Frechette et al., 2020; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

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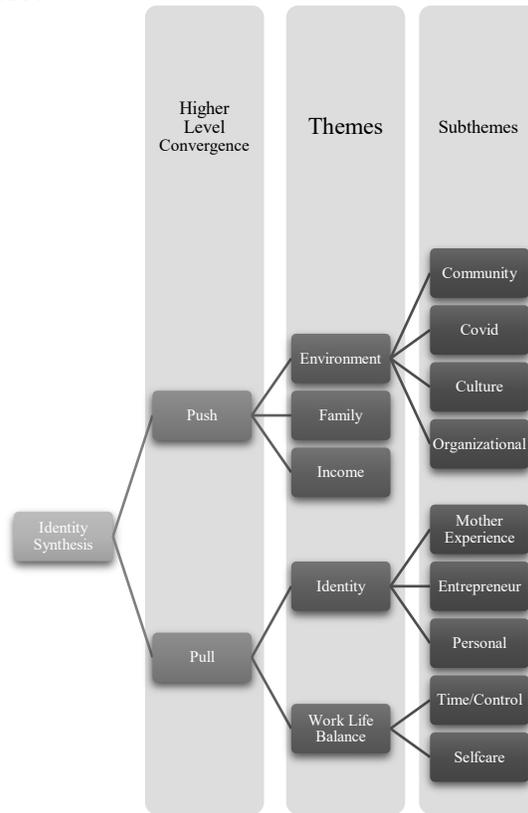
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



During the interviews, structured follow-up questions were asked to gain more data on continued motivations, self-concept, and changing or stagnant goals for the business and self. The qualitative data gathered from the research questions were assessed using concepts found in previous motivational studies, such as the data collected by Carsrud and Brännback (2011); Croom and Miller (2018) and Solesvik et al. (2019), in which motivators are categorized through the specific language used in the interviews, and trends and categories were discovered. An interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) method was used, and data were categorized into themes, subthemes, and meaning, creating the following model:

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Figure 2: Conceptual Framework Tree



Note: Conceptual framework tree contains data derived from interview analysis

Research Question

What are the motivators of United States-based mompreneurs to start and continue an entrepreneurial venture after motherhood? Through interpretive phenomenological analysis, a list of motivations is extracted from interviews with the aforementioned population of mompreneurs. These motivations have been determined through a process of theme and subtheme analysis, and results support and refute the hypothesis that mompreneurs as a group have unique motivations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Embarking upon a topic such as mompreneurship and motivation is a melding of two topics – one longstanding and thoroughly reviewed, and the other newly defined and ripe for investigation. Motivation as a topic has multiple routes in which to travel down, from the biological path of procreation to the nuances of human addiction, to the basic instinct of animal behavior. Yet, according to Baumeister (2016), it does not have an overall general theory to define it, and Baumeister simply states that in its most basic form, “motivation is wanting” (p. 1). Motherhood, on the contrary, is frequently seen as the opposite of wanting and can be viewed as the ultimate act of giving. Giving life, giving care, even giving sustenance from one’s own body. Yet, the two can work hand in hand at times, building upon each other towards innovation.

Motherhood, while transformative, does not turn off the human desire to want and may change a mother’s wants altogether (Cai et al., 2019; Foley et al., 2018). Motherhood has been shown to be transformative on a biological level by creating new pathways in the brain, as seen in multiple studies on peripartum women, and affect behavior (Hillerer et al., 2014). A 2014 neurological report on post-partum women found that cognitive abilities, specifically those concerning spatial learning, memory, and navigation, are affected by the biological birth of a child (Hillerer et al., 2014). Hoekzema et al. (2017) found through fMRI brain scans given to women that brain changes are detectable up to two years after childbirth. The findings show differences in the brains of women who have had children and those who have not. Hoekzema et al. found that motherhood alters grey matter in the brain, affecting the mother’s social cognition areas of the brain and creating “long-lasting changes in a woman’s brain” (p. 287). These social cognition changes increase a mother’s ability to read social cues and increase attachment ability in the first two years after childbirth, and the long-term effects are still being discovered and

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defined. These findings did not translate to those not having experienced the biological side of pregnancy, as the fMRIs were also done on fathers and a control group. The study states that “connection of these brain changes [is] to the biological process of pregnancy rather than to experience-dependent changes associated with approaching parenthood” (p. 294), which in relation to the current research, provides the reasoning as to the limiting of the mompreneur population to those who have biologically given birth. Hoekzema et al.’s groundbreaking study supports the unique differences in those who have given birth on an organic level, thus further fueling the question of what are the differences for a mother on a psychological and behavioral level.

Mompreneurship is a specific facet of business and entrepreneurship, as it is defined by a business started after motherhood, and “as a group, they deserve attention, as in theory these women have reframed the construction of intensive mothering expectations and career expectations” (Carrigan & Dubeley, 2013, p. 93). Entrepreneurial motivations are a studied subset, and literature has supported that traditional entrepreneurs tend to have what is deemed *internal motivation* or individualistic, goal-oriented motivation (Bolzani & Der Foo, 2018; Carsrud & Brännback, 2011) for starting business ventures. When coupled with the giving nature of motherhood and the biologically transformative experience of motherhood, the possibility of a new and unique motivational drive for mompreneurs is evident.

Motivation in Entrepreneurship

Work on traditional entrepreneurial motivation addresses human motivation, defined as “the purpose or psychological cause of an action” (Fayolle et al., 2014, p. 682) and is argued to be greatly intertwined with values when entrepreneurial ventures are discussed. This research relies heavily on the work of Schacter et al. (2011) and traditional psychology-based work on

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human behavior. Fayolle et al.'s (2014) conceptualized that set personal values within the entrepreneurial person are what drives the motivation to start the venture. Values are described as “abstract beliefs...[that] guide people as they evaluate events, people and actions” (p. 682) and are the driving force in decision-making, thus having a strong connection to motivation. These values are different in each individual, built by the macro-and micro-ecosystems in which one is reared, and may also be influenced by intrinsic personality preferences, though it is substantially created by one's cultural and lived experience (pp. 682-684). Values create the individual scaffolding for decision-making based upon beliefs that have become unconscious and affect a person's attraction to certain types of risk-taking behavior, need for achievement, and desire for independence (Jaén & Liñán, 2013).

Lived and cultural experience creating internal values can create personal desires and needs, which can turn into motivating goals. Carsrud and Brännback (2011) offer a strong background on the role of motivation on the traditional entrepreneur and show findings that the traditional entrepreneur is goal motivated, also defined as *internally* or *drive* motivated. Internal motivation tends to have a flavor of self-focus, individualism, and even pride, which can be a driving force in innovation and create successful ventures (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Shastri et al., 2019). These findings are echoed in the study done by Bolzani and Der Foo (2018), which found that their sample of entrepreneurs, 76% of which were male, tended to be internally motivated, where “specifically five values underlie [sic] entrepreneurs' internalization intentions—achievement, power, self-direction, benevolence, and security—and generate heterogeneous motivational patterns” (p. 640). Fayolle et al. (2014) also state that minorities and varying ethnic groups have been shown to have group-specific values and motivations that affect

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their entrepreneurial ventures, supporting the hypothesis that mompreneurs, with their unique experiences and values, also have distinctive motivations.

Push and Pull Factors

Shastri et al. (2019) state in their India-based study that international research has shown entrepreneurial ventures tend to have “push” and “pull” factors that encourage people to embark on an entrepreneurial venture. “Push” factors include motivators such as the need for higher income or dissatisfaction with current job, while “pull” factors include more desire-based motivators, such as a desire for more income or success.

Those with push motivations to start their own business have been described as having a need-based motivation (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Kirkwood, 2009; Shastri et al., 2019). The need for a higher income can be attributed to a base need of providing sustenance for one's own life and basic necessities. Examples of those using a push motivation have been described in the work of Edralin (2012), who looked at entrepreneurial ventures in the Philippines where 99.6% of the total businesses are micro, small, and medium-sized, with most being a micro-business, and 47% are run by women, and a majority being retail based (p. 207). The findings show that there has been a shift for both husband and wife are needed to work to provide for the family, rather than adhere to the traditional female role of homemaker and caretaker. They are then pushed and motivated by the need to provide (Edralin, 2012; Patrick et al., 2016). A push motivation that is contingent upon dissatisfaction with the current job may have a multitude of different reasons behind the dissatisfaction. Kirkwood's (2009) exploratory research on push and pull motivators showed dissatisfaction in jobs was the largest push factor, with 48% of men and 32% of women listing it as the main motivator in becoming an entrepreneur (p. 352). Dissatisfaction appeared to stem from internal relations within an organization, including a

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worker not agreeing with the direction that the organization is taking and thus feeling pushed to start their own business due to these types of disagreements and with the organizational structure or leadership (Kirkwood, 2009). Another major push factor listed in the research for women particularly is needed flexibility to care for the family while also providing (Edralin, 2012; Kirkwood, 2009; Patrick et al., 2016). The connotation of the word push insinuates that the entrepreneur is somewhat feeling “pushed” (Kirkwood, 2009) into starting one's own business due to these outside factors that affect the entrepreneur’s (and their family’s) well-being.

Pull factors tend to be internally based motivations that stem from internal desire and need for autonomy (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Kirkwood, 2009; Patrick et al., 2016). While the desire for higher income is included as a pull factor, it differentiates from a need for higher income as seen in the push or necessity motivator. The desire for higher income is an internal choice that the entrepreneur chooses to pursue their own business venture with the motivation of possibly making a higher income than they are able to in an organization (Kirkwood, 2009). Entrepreneurship at times can be seen as an opportunity to make money without an earning ceiling or top salary, as seen in some organizations (Barba-sánchez & Atienza-sahuquillo, 2017). Motivation for working for oneself can be a perception that all the work going in and all the profits or earnings go directly to the entrepreneur. While this may or may not be fully true, as there are large costs involved in running a business, the idea or motivation that the work one puts indirectly reflects the profits one takes out can be an internal pull factor for an entrepreneur (Barba-sánchez & Atienza-sahuquillo, 2017; Carsrud & Brännback, 2011). Another pull factor discussed and seen in the literature is the identity or idea of success and the feelings of pride that can be attributed to creating one's own business (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Shastri et al., 2019). Previous studied on entrepreneurial motivation it is found that the desire and need for

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recognition can be high in those who have entrepreneurial ventures (Bolzani & Der Foo, 2018). This internal desire for success and pride can be an identity-based driving factor, and the entrepreneur can feel compelled internally and may not be happy working under another person (Bolzani & Der Foo, 2018; Kirkwood, 2009; Patrick et al., 2016).

Female Entrepreneurship

Female entrepreneurship is an important facet of the business and commerce world, encompassing one-third of small businesses and growing (<http://www.prnewswire.com>, 2018). Data has shown that from 1975 through 1995, the rates of self-employed women grew by 75%, outpacing the growth of self-employed men (Patrick et al., 2016). The growth rates have remained stagnant for both men and women through 2015, though data shows that when the female population is placed into subsets of married and unmarried, the unmarried subset of the entrepreneurial women continues to show growth (Patrick et al., 2016). Though the growth is not as robust as pre-1995 female entrepreneurial growth, it does continue to grow larger as more women enter the small business world.

It has been suggested that men tend to be motivated by “pull” factors while women tend to be motivated by “push” factors (Patrick et al., 2016). This is echoed in Solesvik et al. (2019) when it is stated that “opportunities for female entrepreneurs often arise from societal or community needs. This, in turn, strongly influences their motivation to start a business” (p. 694). The study supports that there are differences in female and male entrepreneurial motivators, and a traditional (male) entrepreneur tends to have goal-directed, success, or financial gain motivations (internally based), while the female is motivated by a community (externally based) need. Shastri et al. (2019) argue that women can have a mix of both “push” and “pull” motivations, and there is a reference to the Kirkwood (2009) study, stating “that while women

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were pulled into entrepreneurship in a remarkably similar way to men, the push factors they experienced were largely related to their families particularly flexibility with children” (p. 340). Carsrud and Brännback (2011) offers a strong background in the role of motivation on the traditional entrepreneur and shows findings that the traditional entrepreneur is drive motivated, which may not be the case in a mompreneur, as the research shows stronger evidence towards external and role conflict motivation in this mompreneur subset, and also a strong desire for flexibility which drives women to start a business (Kirkwood, 2009; Patrick et al., 2016).

Mompreneurs

Research tends to show contrasting motivations in female entrepreneurs to previous studies on general entrepreneurial motivators and also offers differing motivations unique to mompreneurs. A 2019 study in South Africa states that “fewer differences were observed between males with children and males without children, compared to females with and without children, therefore implying that the responsibility of children among men does not have a large effect on their business motivation and activities” (Meyer & Keyser, 2019, p. 69). This study appears to support that the converse is true and that there are measurable differences in female motivation when one becomes a mother. Cultural expectations appear to play a large part in those differences, yet as seen in the work of Hoekzema et al.’s (2017) mother brain scans, there could be biological factors as well, such as social cognition supported thinking strategies that change mother’s thinking (p. 291). Whether it is nature or nurture as the underlying culprit, the end result appears to be unique differences in motivation for mothers to start a business.

Cai et al. (2019) state that “motherhood may make self-employment a more attractive investment because of the greater flexibility in self-employment than paid-employment” (p. 2). The study goes on to discuss the possibility that the act of becoming a mother affects one’s

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motivation to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, as family responsibilities become the highest indicator of employment, and flexibility with childcare is the largest draw to self-employment (Cai et al., 2019). These findings used the United States-based labor data and focused on the married, college-educated subset of self-employed women. The researchers do not include those that are unmarried or do not have a bachelor's degree or higher, referencing the Patrick et al. (2016) study on self-employed women, and stated that "unmarried women[s]...employment decisions are quite different" (p. 8). The data from Patrick et al.'s (2016) study shows a difference in self-employment rates for married versus unmarried women (at 8% for married, and 4% for unmarried), yet states that data collection in 2015 shows that this gap is closing due to marked increases in businesses run by unmarried women (p. 366). This is also data on women in general, not only on self-employed mothers, yet exemplifies the unique decisions that mothers and women make when choosing to become self-employed.

Foley et al. (2018) categorize mompreneur motivation in a completely unique category, titled "*functional necessity*." This is driven by the mompreneurs' need, rather than desire, for independence and the need to balance the "temporal and perceived moral obligations of motherhood" (p. 325). They go on to argue that there is a large difference in *wanting* control over one's time and *needing* control over one's time that is a unique motivation for mompreneurs (p. 325). The findings in this study also support that the mompreneur had unique motivations that did not have to do with independence as seen in many traditional entrepreneurial ventures, but rather were motivated by family need and were primarily externally motivated. Foley et al. (2018) go as far as to say the mompreneur is never truly independent by the inherent nature of motherhood. This is an interesting statement to digest, as entrepreneurs can be visualized as rogue, lone, self-starters, forging a path to success through their own innovation. Yet when one

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places a mother in that role, the vision and characterization shifts to one of a woman and her child(ren), no longer alone, and the path towards success driven by the collective need, no longer an independent journey to success.

Other studies echo the external motivators that drive mompreneurial ventures, yet also give voice to the internal motivators, as in the case of Croom and Miller (2018) and Ekinsmyth (2014). Croom and Miller focus on the area of role conflict and how traditional organizational motivators appear to conflict with the role of motherhood, thus creating a desire for entrepreneurial ventures. Croom and Miller discuss the role of stereotypes and the effect that they have on one's own contentment and decision making, particularly how women "often feel pressures to live up to the stereotypes of a "good mother" who is totally and selflessly devoted to her children and a career-oriented employee who is driven to succeed and expected to be deeply committed too[sic] her company" (p. 2). The literature goes on to work with a model of identity developed by Hall (1972), which states that women and men all have varying identities, or *sub-identities* (Hall, 1972) and suffer from conflicting role conflicts within themselves. Yet, the sub-identities inherent to women, specifically mothers, are more likely to produce conflict due to the contradictory nature of the mother (the role of nurturer) and the worker (the role of provider). When these roles do not overlap, they create competition, thus creating discomfort and dissonance within the woman who embodies these competing roles. Croom and Miller (2018) developed a conceptual theory that the venture into mompreneurship is a way in which a mother can self-soothe and reduce conflict and discomfort with herself. Ekinsmyth (2014) also described this role conflict reduction, stating: "Analyses of mumpreneur accounts has revealed that these women seek to combine their dual identities of mother and business-owner, attempting a hybrid identity where family and business are mutually enriching and simultaneously enacted" (p. 540).

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Further work has been conducted in Canada on this type of identity synthesis used by the mother entrepreneur, where an entrepreneurial mother uses both thinking and support strategies to merge the world of work and the familial sphere to create a work and life balance that aligns with both an internal desire for success and the needs of the family (St-Arnaud & Giguère, 2018). This is a unique motivational theory of the mompreneur because it eschews some previous literature on the external motivations of mompreneurs and places motivation on reconciling self-concept, and thus creating a new self-concept and defining a new role – the role of the mompreneur.

Ekinsmyth (2014) also looked at how space and geographical location influence mother entrepreneurs, and she defines mompreneurship as an *adaptive thinking strategy*. This is similar to the *functional necessity* description used by Foley et al. (2018), where need greatly outweighs the want, but rather they are intertwined. One must change their thinking due to new information, needs, and environmental factors. Motherhood is a flood of new information, need, and environmental factors. Motherhood requires adaptation. What part choice or recognition plays into this is to be determined. Croom and Miller (2018) discussed the possibility that mompreneurship is influenced by opportunity recognition, stating, “it may very well be that mompreneurs make different choices because they recognize some opportunities more easily than other entrepreneurs do” (p. 14). And one can argue that if the grey matter is changed by motherhood (Hoekzema et al., 2017), it is quite possible that one’s values, thinking, and motivations may follow suit. Fayolle et al.’s (2014) assertion that motivation is driven by one’s values supports this as well, for *family* tends to be a recognized value from which one would derive motivation.

Feminist perspectives. Carrigan and Dubeley (2013) addressed the feminist entrepreneurial perspective, stating, “Rehman and Frisby (2000) argue that the female

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entrepreneurship literature lacks accounts of how the work is socially constructed from the perspective of those actively engaged in it” (p. 93). Mompreneurship is uniquely female and feminist, as not only does it by definition include only those who have given birth, but it is also a challenge of the status quo and challenges the male-dominated vision of an entrepreneur and the societal constructs of a mother. If feminism is defined as “a person who believes in the social, political and economic equality of the sexes” (Adichie, 2017), then mompreneurship is a path to that equality – between the sexes and within the female workforce. A study by Verniers and Vala (2018) stated that societal constructs lay the groundwork for discouraging females from entering the workforce after childbirth, stating:

Motherhood myths include the assumptions that women, by their very nature, are endowed with parenting abilities, that at-home mothers are bonded to their children, providing them unrivaled nurturing surroundings. Conversely, motherhood myths pathologised alternative mothering models, depicting employed mothers as neglecting their duty of caring, threatening the family relationships and jeopardizing mother-children bondings. (p. 3)

Contrary to the assumptions described by Verniers and Vala (2018), a previous study on mompreneurs’ motivation in Europe found that a common motivation in those interviewed was to have the flexibility to spend time with family while also fulfilling personal motivators (Carrigan & Dubeley, 2013). Discussing motivations with mothers creating entrepreneurial ventures is part of dismantling previously held societal beliefs and invites women to share their own motivations and experiences.

The act of being an entrepreneur has been previously coined as a somewhat male-dominated act (Javadian & Modarresi, 2020; Vracheva & Stoyneva, 2020). The studies that have

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been conducted tend to lean towards male entrepreneurial ventures, and there can be negative connotations associated with female entrepreneurship (Gupta et al., 2014; Javadian & Modarresi, 2020). This can be due to statistically more male entrepreneurs, though the most recent data supports that the male to female entrepreneurial venture is somewhat closer in percentage at 40% of US businesses being female lead (Sheperd, 2020). Yet much of the business language and decision-making has a male-centered perspective and supports males focusing on their careers while females focus on family needs (Javadian & Modarresi, 2020; Vracheva & Stoyneva, 2020). The act of both being a mother and a businesswoman is inherently a feminist act by dismantling these previously held beliefs and creating a female-centered industry where there previously may not have been. Javadian and Modarresi (2020) discuss the shift in language in the entrepreneurial business world to have a new emphasis on terms such as “empathy,” “adaptability,” and “affection” being seen as strengths in entrepreneurial ventures and also being seen as inherently female traits possessed by female entrepreneurs (p. 54). This study goes on to suggest that entrepreneurial ventures as a whole are beginning to acknowledge the need for more traditionally feminine characteristics and thus becoming a strongly feminist enterprise. This is being coined as “positive gender stereotypes” (p. 55).

Yeager (2015) advised that giving women their own voice is how to change the narrative and thus change the stereotypes, quoting the late 18th-century feminist writer Mary Wollstonecraft as stating, “a person has a right...to speak of himself” (p. 755). (Discussion was also given to the use of the pronoun *himself*, as Wollstonecraft used it purposefully in her writing as a challenge to the male-centric societal norms, in both business and writing, in the 18th century.) To define and share motivations directly from the mompreneurs in this research project is a feminist act as it gives this subset of women the platform to *speak of themselves*.

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Geographical and societal perspectives. As seen in studies abroad in Europe and Australia, there are significant findings that mompreneurs embody specific motivations (Ekinsmyth, 2014; Foley et al., 2018), yet a strong majority of the literature found has been conducted in countries outside of the United States. Motivation, as somewhat undefinable as it is, is influenced by society and geography (Baumeister, 2016; Fayolle et al., 2014), thus creating a gap in the literature on US-based mompreneurs.

The geographical motivations of mompreneurship have been identified as having a role in motivating a mompreneur to decide to move into self-employment. Cai et al. (2019) reference location as a factor in self-employment, specifically if a mother lives in her place of birth, thus having access to family and long-time friends for childcare. Proximity to family (defined as being geographically near the place of birth) was found to be an indicator of how many hours a mompreneur could work (more hours if geographically near the place of birth due to higher accessibility to trusted childcare), yet this geographic proximity to family of origin was also found to have the inverse relation to overall mompreneurial ventures. This finding was deemed to be due to increased childcare opportunities allowing a mother to be employed by an outside organization, where flexibility was not as needed (Cai et al., 2019). This focus on geographical location and mother's work opportunities allows some insight into how *where* one is can factor into *how* one lives.

Ekinsmyth (2014) describes mompreneurship as a *spatial phenomenon* in which both time and place are significant factors in the decision to become a mompreneur. Time is described as a multi-factor. Time away from family, time to mother, time to travel to and from work and other places are all factored into the decision or need for the mompreneur venture. Also discussed are the relational pieces that geography affects and how a business is developed.

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Ekinsmyth's found through interviews with mompreneurs in the UK that "Mumpreneurs frequently drew upon their local communities of social contacts, derived through the family-centered activities of daily life, for inspiration, networking, stimulation and recruitment" (p. 541). The where affects the how, and in the case of motivation, can affect the why.

Literature has supported the existence of mompreneurship through a multitude of cultures and societal beliefs. An Australian-based study contemplates that "Women often integrate the business and family relationships together to the community. Mumpreneurs are motivated because they want to make a difference and contribute to the community and society" (Nel et al., 2010, p. 12). Also discussed is the cultural impact, and it is stated that becoming a mompreneur is "a cultural contradiction to motherhood" (p. 15), claiming that the mother's own family resistance is the largest factor impeding mompreneurial ventures in developing nations. Australia has similar cultural ideals to the US, and the idea of a mompreneur as a cultural contradiction may hold true in the current participant findings, yet a decade of time and change may also have shifted this cultural belief. Nel et al. (2010) did allude to developing nations and how mompreneurial ventures are seen in culturally different societies. This is echoed in the work of Meyer and Keyser (2019), who look at the differences between female entrepreneurs and mompreneurs in South Africa. The study discusses that pre-1994, Black people and females in South Africa were prohibited from engaging in business ventures due to Apartheid, and the repercussions and barriers that face female entrepreneurs, particularly mothers, are still felt to this day (pp. 68-69). This is a strong cultural factor in creating a business and also poses the question of if mothers are motivated by family to start a business, how does that affect motivation if the family is the resistant force?

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The predominant culture can have an adverse effect on the mompreneur and also be a driving factor to start a business. As mentioned, previously studied mothers tend to have a community-based internal motivation, and starting a business after motherhood can create a network and community in some places. Edralin's (2012) Philippines-based work showed that the mompreneur venture tends to be a retail or wholesale business, and these businesses are successful despite the cultural norm of a mother being the primary caretaker. When interviewed, the participants reported that they felt positive in their decision because they create a community with those who are geographically close to the mompreneur. Sixty-seven percent of participants reported that the business gave them a "good reputation in the community," and 7% stated they gained friends (p. 204). The community that the business provided was seen as the most positive result of the entrepreneurial venture, ranked over income (37.86%) and stronger family ties (55.71%) (Edralin, 2012, p. 204). The US has different geographical layouts, but one can argue that the internet communities that many businesses start from creating this same sense of community. It is possible that loneliness, or the desire to eradicate loneliness, is a motivator for mompreneurs. This is seen in Kothari's (2017) qualitative research on women entrepreneurs in India. Though this study looked at women entrepreneurs of a variety of statuses (single, married, married with and without children), those who had children appeared to list two main reasons of motivation for starting their business. One reason was *necessity* or *supplementary income*, which was characterized into a category of Woman Entrepreneurs by Need (WEN), where the decision to start the business is based upon a family need. Yet the other was half of women entrepreneurs with children described their motivation as "find an activity as the kids started school" (Kothari's, 2017, p. 124) and *passion*, which was characterized as Women Entrepreneurs by Choice (WEC), and the motivation is more internal and self-focused. India has a specific social

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system, and this study attempted to interview women across a multitude of social castes, offering interesting and culturally specific results that echoed both push and pull motivations when mothers start their own businesses.

One of the closest studies to the present one is a 2012 offering by Jean and Forbes that is an interview-based qualitative research project on mompreneur motivations and expectation gaps that was conducted in the Ontario area of Canada. The findings showed that there were unique mompreneurial motivations, including the “classic” motivators, as well as “‘intrinsic’ factors, including the desire to put their skills to use, to have something just for them or their children, and to help people” (p. 123). The study also discusses how the unique and multifaceted motivations of mompreneurs encourage the subset to persevere in the entrepreneurial venture, even when the expectations are not met. The participants of this study most closely resemble the participants in the present study, yet the United States as a specific group of mompreneurs offers a large distinguishing factor, as the US does not offer a socialized healthcare system. This may or may not have an impact on mompreneur motivations, but according to Acs et al. (2016), lack of healthcare in the USA is a barrier to entrepreneurial ventures in general, and they go so far as to say this causes a sizable distortion in those who fear leaving paid employment due to health issues and prevents people with good ideas from starting a business (p. 49).

Theoretical Perspectives

Identity formation from a theoretical perspective was first discussed by Erikson (1963) as a way to conceptualize identity development in adolescence to adulthood through a psychosocial lens. Erikson described this as eight stages of ego development that are formed through psychosocial crises at specific age ranges, from birth through adolescence, with little emphasis on development after adulthood (Erikson, 1963; Schwartz et al., 2011). At each of these defined

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age-related stages, a “basic virtue” is developed through an internal crisis within the ego and the world that one lives in. The synthesis of these crises creates a virtue, or as defined above, a value (Erikson, 1963; Fayolle et al., 2014). Marcia (1966) offered a further paradigm that looked at how one develops a sense of self and ego identity through exploration and commitment in one’s life. Marcia developed a four-status model to identify where a person is in their identity formation. The four statuses in Marcia’s theory are identity diffusion, where an individual has not yet resolved their identity crisis; identity foreclosure, when one conforms to an identity without exploring what best suits their desire; identity moratorium, where one postpones full identity achievement in order to provide a need, such as shelter; and identity achievement, where one’s identity aligns with goals, beliefs, and values and was achieved after identity exploration (Marcia, 1966). Marcia goes on to hypothesize that those who achieve optimal identity achievement status in late adolescence will continue to reformulate and explore one’s identity and ego through experiences with the external world and continued moral development (Marcia, 1988).

Identity in relation to mompreneurs is discussed in the conceptual work of Croom and Miller (2018), which draws upon the work of Hall (1972) and the theory of role conflict in working females occurring at a higher rate than males due to the alignment of demands and expectations of the traditional male roles being more consistent with the time expectations (Croom & Miller, 2018; Hall, 1972). Croom and Miller (2018) discuss that mompreneurs are experiencing a role conflict, similar to the identity conflict discussed by Erikson (1963) and Marcia (1966), in which one’s external and internal expectations are in misalignment, and the act of alignment (creating a business that works with motherhood) creates a new aligned role or identity (mompreneur). The unique factor is the focus on this role conflict is being experienced

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by a mother and a worker, which differentiates the population from the male adolescents that were the subjects of the previous work. This work has incorporated an identity formation perspective reliant upon Marcia's (1988) theory of identity reformulation through experiences with the social world causing internal or ego dysregulation, and the conflict is resolved through the successful formulation of identity achievement.

Current cultural considerations

One cannot ignore the current world pandemic of the COVID-19 virus and subsequent quarantine and business restrictions placed upon many businesses that began in the United States in March of the year 2020. Each study takes place in a unique and specific time, affected by the current culture and world around the participants. When discussing business during the years 2020-2021, it cannot be ignored that there is a historically large economic shift due to large-scale quarantine, and this affects mompreneurs. Also, one cannot ignore the country-wide school shutdowns, causing what has been labeled a "childcare crisis" in the United States and beyond, where it is reported that up to 8% of the economy could be lost due to childcare needs (Long, 2020).

There is continuing research on how a pandemic will affect entrepreneurs, male, female, or mothers as it is currently unfolding, yet as the economy fluctuates daily with insecurity and the unknown, businesses as a whole are being affected, and it is speculated that mothers are a specific group that is disproportionately affected. The International Monetary Fund has a working document that is titling the current reduction in the female labor force worldwide a "She-cession" (Fabrizio et al., 2021). The most recent data collection as of publication states that women with small children were the most negatively affected, specifically African American women with young children; as well as provides data that men and women with equivalent jobs

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and education, both with young children, lost their jobs at 32% for women and 24% for men (Fabrizio et al., 2021) supporting the disproportionate nature of women leaving the workforce over men.

The US Labor Department has shown that more women have lost their jobs than men, and there appears to be a 12% drop in mothers' labor participation when there is not enough daycare available, and "economists are deeply worried the pandemic will set American women's job prospects back for years" (Long, 2020). Conversely, a quantitative study on females in the workforce over a century showed that in times of economic decline (wars, recessions), females tend to enter the workforce at a higher rate to make up for income not coming in through their partners (Fernández, 2013). Yet this current pandemic is unprecedented and has a number of specific childcare and economic facets to it that are unique to this time period in the world.

Added research questions. The mompreneur may have the ability to be somewhat protected from the childcare issue due to the flexible nature of the venture. But is it flexible enough to weather no childcare coupled with economic uncertainty on a global scale? And how does this uncertainty affect motivation to move forward with the business venture? The literature supports that motivation is tied to values (Fayolle et al., 2014), and when a pandemic is upon the world that is threatening one's health and the health of their loved ones, one's internal value system could be shifted, though the result is still unknown. The values could be shifted towards safety, stability, and the known entity of a job as an employee of a larger organization. The cognitive load is reduced by one not having to think about all facets of a business, and with the added stress of less childcare and more health-related fears due to COVID-19, less cognitive load could be desirable. On the other hand, the changes caused by the pandemic and quarantine could support women in discovering new facets of need and tapping into mothers' unique thinking and

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opportunity recognition (Croom & Miller, 2018), and being a mother during a time of change may afford a unique viewpoint and a unique business opportunity. Asking about motivation during this time will collect data about motivation during a distinctive time in the history of the US and the world at large, which will have lasting changes on values, motivation, and business.

Current Interest

The subject of the entrepreneur is a well-researched topic that has offered ample clarity and discernment to the motivations of traditional entrepreneurs (as seen in the works of Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Fayolle et al., 2014). The specific motivations of a mother entrepreneur, while explored in both developing and Westernized countries, have not been explored from a United States perspective. The United States is unique in its philosophy and offers a wide breadth of mompreneurs in which to obtain data. The United States has frequently been characterized and identified as a capitalist country, where business is not only supported but creating an entrepreneurial venture can be seen as a source of pride (Omoredede et al., 2015). Yet, underneath those platitudes is a country where there is no socialized healthcare, and leaving an organization can cause fear for women on how she will provide basic health-related services to her family (Acs et al., 2016). Another unique factor is the underlying patriarchal roots and beliefs present in the United States and the world at large, and lack of female lead business examples have been shown to discourage women from even imagining themselves as business owners, especially after childbirth (Carrigan & Dubeley, 2013; Verniers & Vala, 2018).

Also specific to the current study is the worldwide pandemic and its' repercussions. As seen in the literature, two separate paths can occur when there is economic uncertainty. On the one hand, women will join the workforce in larger numbers to support the monetary needs of the family (Fernández, 2013). Yet, there is also research that supports the opposite (Long, 2020), and

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this study provides data on how the current pandemic and subsequent quarantine is affecting the mompreneur populations' motivation. Each research project is unique to its own time and space in the world, and the current time is unprecedented, offering an opportunity to add valuable data to the growing research on the motivations of the US-based mompreneur.

Chapter 3: Methods

Research Design Overview

The present study was conducted using a qualitative method with an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach for data collection. Data collection was conducted through 15 ($N = 15$) semi-structured interviews with women identified as mompreneurs recruited by this researcher. Interpretive phenomenological analysis “is a suitable approach when one is trying to find out how individuals are perceiving the particular situations they are facing, how they are making sense of their personal and social world” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p 55). IPA was chosen for use in this qualitative research as this research looked for meaning in the statements of the interviewees, rather than looking for disconfirmation of a theory, as in quantitative methodology (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The primary goal of IPA researchers is to investigate how individuals make sense of their experiences, and it employs a *double hermeneutic*, which was used in this data collection (Frechette et al., 2020; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). This was done by obtaining the initial interpretation presented by the participant being interviewed, and then a second interpretation was employed by this researcher when attempting to make sense of that interpretation (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

IPA is phenomenological in nature, as it is concerned with the participant’s lived experience and perceptions yet acknowledges the researchers’ active role in the interpretation of the phenomenon (Smith & Osborn, 2008). During the current research’s data collection and interpretation, this researcher was an active participant by moderating the semi-structured interview questions and structure and through interactions with the participants during the interviews.

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IPA employs an idiography principle which infers that the research focuses on the particular rather than the universal (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). This method is employed through analysis of each individual participant's interview and experience, and theme creation is based upon each individual experience's narrative and interpretation. Themes are supported through specific quotes by participants, and these experiences are compared and contrasted to find overall similarities or differences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Once the interviews were listened to and transcribed verbatim, it was this researcher's interpretations of the interview content that provided the ultimate findings for this research project, and these findings are supported through direct quotes from participants.

Participants

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with fifteen mompreneurs ($N = 15$), specifically defined as women who have started an independent business after having birthed one or more children. The mompreneurs in this study were located in the United States (California, Oregon, and Washington). The participants were located in the Western United States to ensure ease of interview scheduling, as both participant and researcher were in the same time zone (Pacific Standard Time). This was a consideration due to the time constraints of the research project and in consideration of the perceived and reported busy schedules of mothers with a business during a worldwide pandemic, where school (and possibly childcare) is in limited supply (Long, 2020). Interviews were conducted after obtaining approval from the review board of Touro University Worldwide. An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach was used to code the interview transcripts. The sample size chosen fits with the recommendations of Smith and Osborn (2008) in their exploration of IPA, and the sample size optimizes the use of the semi-structured, in-depth, exploratory interviews. A qualitative research

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design was chosen for this project to support the intent of discovering themes and trends in the mompreneur phenomenon in order to gain a better understanding of the motivations of US-based mompreneurs in their own words.

Inclusion criteria for participants were biologically female participants who have birthed one or more children in the last 15 years, which ensured that the participant continued to have a child in the home while running an entrepreneurial venture. While participants had to be female in sex to have biologically birthed a child, the gender identity of participants was open. Mothers who had a child or children through adoption were not included in the participant set, as the brain changes in females after childbirth (Hoekzema et al., 2017) are referenced as supporting literature, which only spoke to women who biologically birthed a child. Diversity of participants was also considered, and race or marital status was not an exclusionary factor and was sought after for a diverse participant pool.

The second inclusion criterion was that participants must have an independent business that had been created and/or launched after the birth of their child. Independent business was defined as a product or service that is not financially affiliated with another company or business and was not available to consumers prior to the birth of the female owner/founder's child. The profits or financial earnings of the business were not an exclusionary factor but were part of the data collection. Exclusion criteria included no internet access, as the study was conducted during a pandemic and large-scale quarantine, which required that data be collected through electronic methods that rely upon secure internet access. Internet access was not provided by the researcher. An in-person option was not be provided due to safety reasons outlined by the US Center for Disease Control, which at the time of the interviews asked that those not living in the same household "avoid direct contact" (obtained from <http://www.CDC.gov>).

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Participants for the study were recruited via public posts on two social media sites, Facebook and Instagram. Volunteers were asked to participate via two social media posts and through direct messaging. This recruiter posted the first request for participants on a public post on Facebook, with a follow-up post using the same wording on [see Appendix A]. Direct messages were also sent via this researcher's social media accounts to public accounts of known mompreneurs who met the criteria. An incentive of a \$10.00 gift certificate to a coffee shop of the participant's choosing was offered in the posting and the direct messages. Participants responded voluntarily through a private message, post response, and/or provided a private email to receive a consent form and schedule the interview.

Procedure

A total of 21 volunteer participants who met the criteria responded to the posts requesting participation in a doctoral-level research study and provided a private email for communication or reached out to this researcher's private email. An email was sent to each respondent thanking them for their interest within 48 hours of the first contact, and this email included an informed consent that explained the purpose and the procedures of the study [see Appendix B & C]. A written reply or verbal confirmation was required to confirm receipt of the informed consent. Participants were informed that identifying names of participants and businesses are excluded from the final study. However, the type of business is included, as well as the number of children the participant has birthed. A total of 16 mompreneurs responded to the consent form, giving consent to participate. Once the participants were selected and consented to the interview, a web-based meeting time was agreed upon by both the participant and the researcher, and a web meeting was created by the researcher, and the participant was invited to join. The participants all received a demographic data sheet prior to the scheduled interviews, and all were returned

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within one hour of the concluded interview. The demographics collected included age, marital status, how many children the participant has, ages of the children, level of education, identified ethnicity, type of business, and location [see Appendix D]. Of the 16 scheduled interviews, 15 were conducted, with one interviewee having a scheduling conflict that was not able to be rescheduled. One hour of time was allotted for each of the interviews.

The interviews were all conducted through the Web meeting platform “Zoom” due to current restrictions on face-to-face contact due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, as well as time constraints. Confidentiality was secured through the Zoom platforms, as Zoom ensured “end-to-end” encryption that is compliant with standard confidentiality practices and can be found in their “privacy and security” notices on their business website (www.zoom.us/privacy). The interviews were conducted by this researcher in her private office, with no external distractions. The web-based meeting platform allowed for participants to be included from the greater Western US due to no mileage constrictions, as all interviews could be conducted from any place with a computer and internet access. Each participant was informed that the interview was voluntary, for research purposes, and the interview was recorded for research data collection. Recordings were done through the Zoom platform and promptly removed and saved externally in a password-protected cloud storage system.

At the introduction of the interview, each participant was verbally reminded by the interviewer of the purpose of the study and that participation is voluntary. Participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time. Each participant was asked if they had any questions or concerns regarding the consent form that they received through email. The interviewer verbally confirmed receipt of the agreement to the consent form through electronic mail. Participants were informed of the time commitment requested for the interview prior to the

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interview and were asked to confirm that they had the time allotted in their schedules to proceed with the interview at that time. There were no conflicts at that time. The interviews each lasted under one hour, from the shortest at 28 minutes to the longest at 58 minutes. The role of this interviewer was to create a welcoming digital environment, to allow the participant to share their experiences freely, and to guide the interview to ensure that adequate data was collected and that all areas of the proposed focus were discussed. This interviewer used a semi-structured interview questionnaire as a guide [see Appendix E], though each interview had a separate natural conversational flow, and the order of questions was dependent upon the participants' answers.

All participants were given the same introduction by this interviewer and asked the same set of predetermined questions, though the questions were given to participants in a different order to best preserve the fluidity and comfortability of the interview. According to Solesvik et al. (2019), a semi-structured interview is the preferred method of data collection for qualitative research as it allows for organic thoughts and themes to emerge and is best for data collection that is interested in the *how*, *what*, and *why* questions (p. 690). All questions were open-ended, which helped to ensure participation and reduced unintentional directives by this interviewer. This was used to reduce bias and allow for natural conversational flow, and also allowed for participants' to best share their unique and individual experiences and interpretations.

The interview covered predetermined topics and maintained focus on the participants' business, role as a mother, and their interpretation of their motivations and beliefs due to their experiences and current world. The semi-structured interview allowed for a focused divergence (Smith & Osborn, 2008), where the participants were able to freely explore a topic and discuss freeform ideas that it sparked, but the integrity of the data collection was preserved through continued and gentle refocusing of the topic at hand. Each of the 15 interviews conducted

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provided adequate information for analysis. Four (26.67%) of the interviews were interrupted by the mompreneur's child, and each interview was conducted during business hours between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM Pacific Standard Time. Fourteen of the 15 interviews conducted were done with both video and microphone capabilities, and one interviewee was not able to use the video capability, and the interview was conducted via the Zoom platform without the interviewer visually seeing the participant. The participant could both hear and see the interviewer. This did not hinder the interview process.

Prior to the completion of the interview, a verbal debriefing statement was shared with each participant. This debriefing statement was also provided in written form sent to the participants' preferred email addresses. The primary investigator's contact information was provided to allow participants to ask any follow-up questions and also to allow participants to obtain a copy of the results after the completion of the study. The debriefing statement explained the nature of the study, how the information will be utilized, and how as much confidentiality as possible will be maintained [see attachment F]. Within 48 hours of the interview, a \$10 electronic gift card to a coffee shop of the participants' choice was sent to their preferred email. One donation was chosen, and a receipt of the donation was emailed to the participant.

Recording and data transformation

All interviews were both audio and video recorded by the software provided by the Zoom platform, paid for by this interviewer. After the commencement of each interview, an audio and video recording was created that could be found in the recording section of this interviewer's Zoom account. This interviewer would delete the video recording and move the audio recording to a password-protected Microsoft cloud storage account. These audio recordings were then

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transcribed using a paid and password-protected account through NVivo. The transcribed interviews were kept in the password-protected NVivo qualitative analysis system.

Analysis

In order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants, each interview was labeled in chronological order from when it commenced. The interviews were labeled M1 through M15 and referred to by that label throughout the results and discussion section of this project.

IPA analysis, while inviting the *double hermeneutic* of researcher interpretation, is methodical and requires multiple re-reading and listening to the participant interviews. As suggested, the analysis began with a re-visiting, through both an initial listening, transcribing the interview verbatim using the NVivo licensed software, and then and re-reading the transcripts of the first interview to discover the emerging themes (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Each re-reading of the interview(s) notes was added using the notes section of the NVivo software by this researcher, documenting and discovering emerging themes, as well as repeated phrases and implied meanings. The initial few readings and note-taking are considered raw data, and nothing was omitted or given more importance at that time in analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008). For this project, four readings were administered to each interview, M1 through M15.

Analysis of the data continued as themes were developed, initially in chronological order of each interview (listening and reading M1 4 times, then listening and reading M2 4 times). This shifted to listening to each interview chronologically, then going back and reading chronologically from that point and coding accordingly (listening to M4, M5, and so on, returning to read M4 and code themes, moving to M5, and so on). There were discovered larger themes, as well as divergent themes and subthemes, and the subsequent readings allowed for

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continued coding and theme emergence. These themes were then grouped together in a systematic way titled “clustering” in order to determine the larger or overarching themes of the data (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p 71). In practice, it was recommended that all themes in each interview be examined before creating thematic clusters (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012, p 8), and this researcher did not make thematic clusters until all 15 interviews had been coded and re-read four times. These themes were cross-referenced and connected to specific verbiage taken from the interviews in order to connect the themes with the participants’ retelling of their lived experience.

The themes were then analyzed to create a table of “higher level convergences” that emerge from multiple interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p 75). From this analysis, the main themes were developed, and overall themes of the participants emerged, allowing conclusions to be drawn from the data collection, which is presented and interpreted in the findings and discussion sections. The researcher’s own interpretive analysis was used to connect the themes and make salient interpretations that do not diverge excessively from the interviewees’ intent. This researcher relied upon her skills as a psychotherapist of 11 years to embark on this process of analysis. A psychotherapist is required to make a non-judgmental interpretation of patients’ words into diagnosis and treatment planning and is required to make inferences in order to successfully and ethically treat a patient. This skill and practice translated to ethical and responsible interpretation of the data received, based on the best of this researcher’s abilities.

All data was uploaded and coded using the current version of NVivo software, NVivo 1.0. NVivo software is a widely used qualitative analysis software and meets ethical and confidential standards for data collection in an academic context. NVivo has been used in qualitative studies since its release in 1997 and allowed for this researcher to maintain and group

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all data collection in a safe, efficient, and verified manner that has been widely validated for doctorate-level work. The use of this software did not affect the outcome of the data collected as it offers no analysis of the data without user direction. However, the NVivo software does allow for quick and in-depth queries, such as cross-referencing coded phrases, that will be included in the findings and discussion.

Chapter 4: Findings

This interpretive phenomenological study analyzed the motivations of mompreneurs to start a business after childbirth by asking the main research question: “What motivated you to become an entrepreneur after childbirth?” The objective of the IPA was to identify the specific motivations of the mompreneurs and determine if there are overarching themes that could be seen with the population. Qualitative interviews of 15 mompreneurs were analyzed, all living in the Westernmost states of the continental United States.

Demographics

The population interviewed were all mothers who have an independent business started after the birth of one or more of their children. All participants were biologically female and were aged 32 to 44 years old ($M = 36.87$). Each participant had between one and three children ($M = 2$). Fourteen participants identified as White or Caucasian (93.33%), and one participant identified as Black or African American (6.67%). Eleven participants (73.33%) were married, three participants (20%) were separated or divorced, and one was single and never married (6.67%). The highest level of education was also collected: six participants (40%) have completed a Master’s level or Doctorate degree, five participants (33.33%) have completed a bachelor’s degree, two participants (13.33%) have completed a vocational degree, and the remaining two participants completed high school and/or some college (13.33%). Table 1 outlines the collected demographics of the 15 participants that met the criteria to participate in the study.

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Table 1: Participant Demographics

Identification Number	Number of Children	Age	Location	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Education Level
M1	2	35	California	White	Married	College/BA
M2	3	41	California	White	Divorced	Graduate/Doctorate
M3	1	34	Oregon	White	Married	College/BA
M4	2	38	California	White	Separated	Graduate/Doctorate
M5	2	35	California	White	Married	College/BA
M6	3	37	California	White	Married	Graduate/Doctorate
M7	3	34	Washington	White	Married	Graduate/Doctorate
M8	1	32	California	White	Single	Vocational Degree
M9	2	38	Washington	White	Married	Some College
M10	3	44	Oregon	White	Married	College/BA
M11	2	36	Washington	White	Married	High School
M12	2	37	California	White	Married	College/BA
M13	2	37	California	Black	Divorced	Vocational Degree
M14	1	36	Oregon	White	Married	Graduate/Doctorate
M15	2	39	California	White	Married	Graduate/Doctorate

Results

Thematic qualitative analysis coding allows for the researcher to find themes and meaning within a set of qualitative interviews through a structured strategy of reading and re-reading transcribed interviews (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008). During the interview process, semi-structured questions were used in an organic manner, which allowed for a natural flow of conversation and allowed for the interview questions to not be repetitive if an interviewee answered a question with an answer to another question (Smith & Osborn, 2008). However, each interviewee was directed to answer questions and discuss the idea of motivation for that mother to start a business after childbirth. These answers were compiled and coded in a way to find themes and sub-themes that showed trends and similarities in motivations for the mompreneur population in the western United States.

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The analysis took place immediately following the conclusion of the first interview and transcription completed on December 30th, 2020. Adhering to traditional IPA procedure with an idiographic philosophy, the initial interview was listened to in its entirety, while notes were taken on emerging themes. No possible themes were left out, and themes began to emerge through the second reading of the initial interview (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Interviews were transcribed and listen to in chronological order (M1 through M15) of when the interview was conducted. Analysis of the transcribed dialogue aims to find the meaning in the complex stories and language of the participants, rather than identifying the frequency of terms used (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Themes were gathered through systemic, multiple readings of each interview, with phrases and passages coded through the NVivo qualitative coding system. All emergent themes were placed with equal importance, with subsequent readings and researcher analysis developing higher-level convergent themes, major themes, and subthemes engaging the double hermeneutic process of finding meaning and themes through interpretation (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The results of this study are organized by presenting the major emergent themes, with example quotes to illustrate the analytic process of arriving at the theme findings. Examples of subthemes are presented as well under the major emergent theme that they coincide with. The major convergent themes of *push* and *pull* factors will be presented in the discussion section, with examples of how each theme is interpreted as a *push* or *pull* factor. No specific quotes were coded under *push* or *pull* factor theme headings. Rather this was used as a way to organize the data and provide meaning.

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Themes

Themes were developed through multiple listenings of the interviews and pulling out and highlighting stories, experiences, or implied meanings from the interviewees. Categories were created starting with the first interview (M1) and then continually built upon with each interview and subsequent reviews through the final interview (M15).

Identity

Identity was defined by one's self-concept and coded as an internal reasoning for starting a business, whether that was a personality identification or a self-identification with an identified role. An example of *identity motivation* stemming from one's own self-concept is as follows:

M1: "I think I had always pictured working for myself in some sort of aspect, but I didn't think I would be doing this."

Identity as a major theme consists of three subthemes, each one found in all 15 interviews as a motivational reason for starting one's own business. The subthemes consist of *entrepreneurial identity*, *mother experience identity*, and *personal identity*.

Entrepreneurial identity:

M5: "I always wanted my own business. When I was eight years old I wanted my own business – I've wanted my own space and my own business."

M13: "I wanted to open a business prior to the kids; prior to everything."

M14: "I need to be in control of everything that happens professionally, and I don't like working under someone or under a business because I feel like there's always something that I don't agree with."

Mother experience:

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M5: I would not have this business without motherhood, but I really do believe that I had to have all that other stuff before happen to realize that this is the journey I was supposed to be on.

M6: It all kind-of stemmed from being a mother – like the name of my business (is from my son).

M8: (Motherhood) definitely lit a fire under my [expletive deleted] as it wasn't just about me. And I think anything I do that I success at, it's because I am putting other people before me.

Personal identity:

M15: Being a female entrepreneur and being a female in the world is a significant experience.

M2: It's hard for me to connect that I'm doing it for my kids because I am really doing it for me.

M5: It took me a very long time to get from idea to building myself up, finding my own strength, trying to identify and being a whole person before I jumped into the business side.

M7: I'm proud. I have to say, I'm proud of myself.

Work-life balance

Work-life balance was also a theme listed by all 15 participants as a motivation for starting one's own business entity. *Work-life balance* is defined by the participants as setting a boundary between work and the needs of the self and the family. Examples of *work-life balance* themes are as follows:

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M10: I feel like that's the bonus of having your own business, I can work as little or as much as I want to and I can make that schedule.

M2: I want to be able to create my life to work for me, as a mom and a therapist.

M3: I'm so grateful that I own my own business because I have the flexibility to answer emails when I need to and schedule sessions when I need to and edit late at night when my kid goes to sleep - having the flexibility to move that around throughout the day - I think it has saved us

Work-life balance consisted of two subthemes, *self-care* and *time (control)*.

Selfcare:

M10: I do look forward to having the house to myself when I can get back on my workout schedule, which is huge for me mentally.

M2: I feel like I'm having to put self-care as a major, major priority for sure. Just like sleep and exercise and doing my own therapy and my own self care practices, because otherwise I would be spiraling down the drain for sure.

Time and control:

Time was seen as a large motivator (mentioned in 12 of the 15 interviews), but particularly having control of one's own time. These were coded as follows:

M10: I think the way the hours would turn out, probably in a week, I probably end up kind of working full time, but it's all from home and it's all on my own hours. So that's really great.

M14: Being able to choose your own schedule was a big part of it.

M2: I wanted to make my own schedule. You know, working 9 to 5 does not work as a mom. You can't [expletive deleted] drop off your kids or pick them up from school. Do I

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want somebody else dropping off and picking up my kids every single day from school?

No, I do not.

Environment

External environmental factors were found to be a major theme, but primarily as an umbrella over four sub-themes that are all a product of ones' external environment as a motivator. sub themes include *community*, *culture*, *organizations*, and *COVID-19*. Examples of each of these sub-themes are as follows:

Community:

M11: My whole business is like just searching for a group. You know, it's like the store is great, but really it was like searching for a community that I couldn't find or I didn't know how to find.

M12: I started to kind of just casually chat with people about it - and the interest was crazy. These moms were in [town redacted], but the moms were like 'I need something, anything.'

M5: My hope is that I can inspire and motivate other women to really embrace that side of themselves that often goes dormant when you have a child. And recognize that, even if it's not a clear aspiration, that you have aspirations beyond your kids.

Culture:

M5: I just kept feeling like, why am I the only one fighting against these, like this bureaucratic system of failure? Because I couldn't do both (mother and work at cooperate job).

M8: It's just like the way we've been raised and in our nature to water it down (ambition), I guess, and the older I get, the more I realize 'no I'm pretty bad [expletive deleted].'

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M7: I feel like that's kind of an expectation sometimes that you need to be hands on (as a mother) all the time. I guess I don't believe in that.

Organizations:

M1: It felt really overwhelming to think about going back to work for someone else.

M12: I think corporate America continues to make women have to hide that they're moms, because the jobs aren't structured in a way that allows a mom to be a mom and to be a working mom; it's the job but it's also the company culture.

M13: I would work for an organization if it allowed me the type of freedom that I needed.

M14: I don't understand how people work for people that just don't care about them and it's very obvious, and they still show up and they're still happy here, you know pseudo happy, and they do that every day.

Covid-19:

The subtheme of COVID-19 was created due to the current worldwide pandemic that is affecting all 15 participants directly. The COVID-19 subtheme had two further subthemes that consisted of the positive impact of COVID-19 on the entrepreneurial venture and the negative impact of COVID-19 on the business. This will be addressed further in the discussion section.

COVID-19 subtheme phrases were coded as follows:

M11: I mean, business wise, it was just a roller coaster. We've had some of our busiest months and we've had some of our slowest months ever.

M15: It's actually created more visibility for my company and at the same time it's been an added thing that's actually kind of burdensome on my family, where I'm doing these things at night and I'm having to take a lot of time to do these extra things.

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M12: The pandemic in a way was actually really good for us. I think good for the business revenue. But I also think that helped us, me, figure out our voices and our full brand.

Family

The external needs of the family, specifically childcare, was a motivational theme found in 11 of the 15 interviewed subjects. Family as motivation was coded as follows:

M14: You miss out on a lot of things when you're working all day and you don't get to spend time with your child and then, you know, when their home it's like, what, 3-4 hours maybe, so you miss a lot.

M6: It has just kind of grown into this business on its own that's really helped supplement our family and just made things a lot easier for us. And it gives me the ability to stay home and raise my kids.

M1: I really wanted this job, yet, when it came down to it, I wasn't ready to just- in my thoughts- I can't just throw my kid into daycare I can't accept this job (with an organization).

Income

Income, or the ability to provide for the family, was a motivation discussed by 14 of the 15 participants. The difference is in how income motivates the participants will be discussed in the discussion section. Some examples of income motivation are as follows:

M12: I want to make money, I want to bring money home, you know. But I also know I'm building something pretty cool.

M2: When you're working for an organization, there's just such a limit and how much money you're going to make per hour, whereas with my own business I feel like it's sort

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of exponential, like it's just up to me to decide if I'm ready to charge more or expand my services or do different things.

M4: What I realized with the professor work was that it wasn't financially sustainable for my family. You know, I don't make decisions purely based on money, but we live in [location redacted] and I want to be successful. I want to give my kids a better life than I had growing up.

Identity synthesis

A unique motivator found in 14 of the 15 participants was the motivation of synthesizing one's various identities or roles. This motivator built upon the identity formation theoretical framework of Marcia (1988) as well as taking into account the role conflict avoidance work of Croom and Miller (2018). Participants shared a number of phrases and motivations that appeared to have an identity synthesis motivator, a sample of phrases are as follows:

M12: I just feel like when you're in corporate America, you have to hide the fact that you're a mom. You kind of have to pretend like you don't have kids, that you don't have to go home to relieve the nanny.

M1: You know, another reason as you work your own hours, and you can be yourself.

M11: I just try to always keep in mind, like at the end of the day, I think I'm doing what's best for them by being a working mom and that's also what's best for me.

M5: I threw myself into my career because I love working, like it fills me up in a way that ... I love my kids too, they're different things. Having [name redacted] was this reaffirmation that I didn't want to stay home with my kids. It didn't drive me. It didn't inspire me in the way that I wanted it to...there was a part of me that enjoyed it, but I felt so stagnant in my own brain.

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Findings summary

Each participant offered a unique view into their various motivations to start a business after childbirth. Overall, themes were able to be extrapolated through the use of a double hermeneutic, where the participant instilled meaning into the explanation of her lived experience, and this researcher continued to instill meaning and find trends and themes in the transcribed dialogue of the participants. Table 2 reveals the two (or three in the event of two themes having the same number of references) most identified motivation of each participant, with the most identified listed first followed by the second most identified motivational theme.

Table 2: Most Identified Motivators to Start an Independent Business After Childbirth

Participant Identification Number	Most Identified Motivators to Start an Independent Business After Childbirth
M1	Mother experience; Identity
M2	Identity synthesis; Income
M3	Entrepreneurial identity; Personal identity
M4	Income; Identity synthesis; Work life balance
M5	Entrepreneurial identity; Identity synthesis
M6	Identity synthesis; Mother experience
M7	Identity synthesis; Personal identity
M8	Personal identity; Mother experience; Entrepreneurial identity
M9	Mother experience; Organizations
M10	Time and Control; Personal identity
M11	Mother experience; Work life balance
M12	Identity synthesis; Mother experience
M13	Personal identity; Entrepreneurial identity
M14	Personal identity; Identity synthesis; Organizations
M15	Personal identity; Organizations

Chapter 5: Discussion

The question of what motivates a mother to begin an independent business after childbirth allowed for a dynamic dialogue between the interviewer and the participants, engaging the mompreneurs to find meaning in their stories and experiences. Multiple themes were discovered through the repeated listening and reading of the 15 interviews by the researcher, engaging in a double hermeneutic through researcher-derived thematic categories. The emergent themes of *income, family, environment, identity, and work-life balance* coincided with higher-level convergent *push* and *pull* themes from traditional entrepreneurial ventures (Patrick et al., 2016; Solesvik et al., 2019). What diverted from traditional entrepreneurial ventures was the motivation of *identity synthesis*, which employs the pull factor of identity and work-life balance with the push factors of the environment, family, and income. Mothers were feeling pulled in alternate directions by expected cultural norms, and thus synthesizing these identities internally allows for reduction of the discomfort of polarized identities and the creation of a new identity of Mompreneur.

Each mother did have a unique story to tell with specific personalized motivations, yet convergent and similar themes were woven in all interviews, and overall motivating themes could be extrapolated from the data. Grouped under the higher-level convergent themes of push and pull factors, all themes will be discussed.

Push Factors

Push factors have been characterized as having a need-based push for a person to start an entrepreneurial venture (Foley et al., 2018). This has been found to coincide with the motivations of female entrepreneurs in traditional entrepreneurial studies, where the need of the family or the

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community outweighs the need of the individual (Nel et al., 2010). The findings in the current study show a number of push factors being a motivator for starting a business after childbirth.

Income

Income has been found to be a contributing motivational factor in entrepreneurial ventures, with multiple entrepreneurs attributing “making more money” as a major factor in their entrepreneurial motivations (Edralin, 2012; Patrick et al., 2016). The current data shows that this was one of the least prevalent factors in motivating mothers, with 7 of the 15 (46.67%) of interviewed participants stating that their business was not contributing to the family’s financial stability, and some stating that the money made from the entrepreneurial venture is returned to the business for marketing or other expenses (M12, M13, M5, M7). M6 states that the money is used to “put more into the kids’ savings accounts and prepare for the future,” and she is one of three interviewees that stated that the profits are used to make their lives more comfortable rather than for everyday needs, which negated income as a driving motivational factor in starting a business.

Reasoning as to why income is a lesser motivating factor for the participants could include multiple other factors. Working, in general, is done many times for survival, as providing income for the family as a base need to take care of necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, as seen in the work of Edralin (2012) where her mompreneur participants were driven to start a business to supplement the family income. The biggest differing factor in how important income is in the motivations of the interviewed mompreneurs appears to be marital status, with the separated, divorced, and unmarried mothers finding the opportunity for earning potential to be a motivator to leave the stability of an organization. M2 states that by working for herself, it feels as though the ceiling or cap on earning potential has been removed:

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Yeah, that's what made me motivated to expand my business, because I really recognized that I just need even more flexibility and I really need to make more money and work less hours, and like when you're working for an organization, there's just such a limit on how much money you're going to make per hour. Whereas with my own business, I feel like it's sort of exponential, like it's just up to me to decide if I'm ready to charge more or expand my services or do different things. So, I'm not like making very good money right now, but I feel like I have the potential to. Whereas if I'm in an organization, I don't.

(M2)

This is a motivator when one is a sole provider or primary provider for the children and possibly can add more drive to start one's own business and make a livable income. Never-married participant M8 states that failure "wasn't an option," but she also states, "I love what I do so much. I love that it has been such a great financial stability for me and my son." She discusses how her experience being a young single mother drove her to leave a salon and start her own business to be able to provide the most she could for her son.

Some participants did allude to different ways that income is provided by the flexibility of their entrepreneurial job, removing the need for the expense of childcare, which can cost between \$10,000 to \$16,000 per year in California, Oregon, and Washington according to the Economic Policy Institute (epi.org) 2021 report. If the mompreneurs' job removes the expense of childcare, it is possible to consider that an income, though as stated by M5 of her profits, "I made zero dollars because I paid a lot more in childcare," which supports the findings that income is not a major motivation for half of the interviewed mompreneurs.

Health care benefits are also a factor in mompreneurial decisions and motivations. Benefits, which include healthcare coverage, dental care, retirement packages, sick time, and

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paid time off, are considered part of a compensation package in the United States (Acs et al., 2016). The benefit of healthcare, in particular, is a motivation to stay at an organization according to Acs et al. (2016) and supported in this data collection by a small number of participants, as two interviewees (M2 & M15) mentioned the loss of benefits as a factor that deterred one from leaving an organization before other motivations encouraged the shift.

The United States is one of a few developed countries that does not provide guaranteed healthcare through the government, and it is expected to be an employee or individual responsibility. Acs et al. (2016) go so far as to infer that this is a deterrent to creativity and entrepreneurial ventures, as one may stay at an organization for safety and self-preservation reasons. As discussed further, the internal pull factors may be a specific unique identifier as to why some people, and these mompreneurs, in particular, eschew that reasoning and find motivation through other arenas to begin their business and leave the safety of an organization, as exemplified by these two participants:

M15: “Even though I was giving up the organizational benefits of a 401K and healthcare and that kind of stuff, it felt worthwhile to go the other direction and go full time on my own.”

M2: “I did give up my benefits, which was hard, but not that hard. Like the benefits of having my own business is worth it.”

Another income-based thematic factor that emerged is the idea that when becoming an entrepreneur, if one is not working, there is no pay, which supports income as a motivating factor. For M4 there is an added pressure to continue to work to provide for the family as a newly single mother of two. She stated, “that's kind of the flip side of it ... Yes, I have flexibility, but every minute I work is money made, and that is a lot of pressure.” This sentiment was echoed

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with mompreneur M13, who stated that she would overextend herself at times to make money to provide and stated: “Being an entrepreneur, it's a lot, you have to be emotionally stable and you cannot mess up.” M13 was referencing a lived experience of being tired one evening and wanting to leave work for the next day but knowing that that work ultimately would be left to her and could hinder her business and ability to make money. Interview M12 felt similar pressure of working long hours to make an income and build a business: “I'm working a lot ... I often feel like the business does not drive forward unless I'm the one driving it forward ... I'm the one that has to keep showing up every day, pushing it forward, which can be kind of exhausting.” M12 is one of the six mompreneurs that have staff working under her but continues to feel that the pressure to bring in income is in direct relation to the number of (wo)man-hours and work that she puts into her own business.

What was found to be a justification for the large number of hours needed to make a business thrive is the underlying satisfaction gained from creating one's own successful business as well as the possibility of more income. When mompreneur M14 was asked the question: “Do you think it's more work working for yourself over working for an organization?” Participant M14 answered, “100%, but it's enjoyable because it's benefiting me.” This type of answer crosses over into the identity theme as motivation for that benefit can be monetary as well as emotional. The line or discernment between income and one's own sense of success has also been addressed in previous research. In the United States, wealth can be seen as an indicator of the idea of success (Omoredede et al., 2015). It has also been discussed in the recent media that there is income inequality between women and men, with sources stating that women make \$0.82 to the dollar that a man earns (statistics obtained from <http://www.aauw.org>, 2020). When

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working at an organization, an earning cap or ceiling may be felt, whereas working for oneself, the earning potential can feel limitless.

Environmental

Another push factor is outside environmental factors, which were split into four distinct subthemes: *community*, *Covid-19*, *culture*, and *organizational culture*. These four subthemes are all motivational factors that are created by the world around us and are push motivators as it is their effect on the participants that cause an action.

Organizational culture. Motherhood can be perceived as all-encompassing at times, even changing one's brain function (Hoekzema et al., 2017), yet according to the participants, an organization does not change with the needs of the mother, and this can cause unhappiness. M12 stated that the needs of the organization no longer appeared to have the same weight when a child's life became a priority, and the drive of "climbing up [the] ladder" became not enough to motivate this mother to leave her family behind – and identity as a mother – in order to achieve organizational defined goals:

"I drank the Kool-Aid a little bit in the in the corporate world, where ... the goal was to get as high up those companies as you could and make as much money and get the highest title. That was always the thing. And then when I had kids, I remember when my first kid was born, I told my boss that - because they were worried that I wasn't going to come back - and I was like, no, I'm coming back. But I was like, if I'm spending eight hours a day away from my kids, it better be worth it.... So, it just wasn't fulfilling anymore. And I think if I didn't have kids, I think I might still subscribe to that because there's nothing that challenges that, that there would be no shift in priorities and nothing that would force me to really assess - Is it worth spending all this time? We're like

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climbing up this ladder, like, what is the ladder even, you know what I mean? I had all that introspection because I had kids that I had to somehow fit into my priority list.”

(M12)

Some participants find that working for others does not align with their personal values and desire to do things their own way. Participant M14 shared ethical issues that she had in the mental health field working for others, discussing that “working in those places really lead to a lot of burnout.” Also stating that “essentially I was doing everything myself anyways. And so I was like, why am I working for someone else when I could just go and do this for myself and actually make all the money.” (M14) This was a motivating factor for her along with her self-described inability to work well with others supervising her. Participant M15, in the same field of mental health, stated that the burnout that she felt was “making me hard to be around in general, including as a mom, and as a partner in my family.” M3 reports that she “had never been treated the way that I wanted to be treated within that company,” stating that the toxic company culture was a motivation to leave and that getting pregnant felt like “my ticket out.” The inability to find the purpose or feel seen or valued in an organization was a motivating factor for these mompreneurs to leave and start a business of their own, as they report feeling happier working on their own with less burnout.

Motherhood was discussed as being an antithesis to organizational structure. Participant M5 speaks about the innate inability of an organization to work with mothers as mothers, stating, “I realized very early on that it wasn't work. That was not the issue. It was the infrastructure around work ... why couldn't I show up after 9 o'clock because my daycare didn't open until 9.” The seeming inability for an organization to see the employee as a whole person, mother, woman, family person, and worker created personal struggles in being able to work hard for an

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organization that is not accepting and accommodating to all parts of the individual. M5 goes on to state, “I realized I was going to have to leave my (corporate) job. And the reason I was leaving my job was not because I wanted to stay home with my kids. It was because there was no other way ... I couldn't do what I felt like was successful at work and be a success at home and have a stable family.” This mom, like others interviewed, attempted to create this balance with her organization but was failed regarding flexibility, commute times, and being able to balance and desire to work for somebody else.

Culture. Culture was seen as a motivator for the participants due to a number of interviewees (46.67%) finding that their entrepreneurial ventures were fighting against a culture deemed oppressive. M12 shared a personal experience of her judgments of a previous female boss who had to leave work every day at 4:00 PM, and M12 felt anger that she was staying longer at work. She goes on to state that she was not actually angry, but it was a reaction to “the culture, and it’s the narrative that you’re raised up on.” This participant chose to offer flexibility in work times to her employees (primarily female) and to herself in order to consciously remove the culturally based narrative of being in the office at certain times a marker of “good worker” (Ludovico, 2017).

Interviewees discussed the greater patriarchal expectations of work and society and how it did affect them and their families, and how starting a business on one's own fights against this imposed narrative. Participant M5 stated that even the word “entrepreneurial” was owned by men rather than women. She went on to state that “We don't want to take up space, we don't want our own aspirations, we don't want to be anything other than what society expects of us.” Participant M15 states that she is more cognizant of her business as she has a male working alongside her, and states that being a female in the world is a significant experience of its own,

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and she always “Introduce(s) myself as doctor (name redacted) because I feel like it's important as a female to demonstrate that authority. Whereas a male doesn't necessarily have to.” The internal thought process of realizing the barriers and possibly extra work needed to be taken seriously as an entrepreneur and a businessperson in this world was something that six mothers touched upon with some disdain. Participant M14 even named the patriarchy of working at an organization where client load was pushed upon the workers, rather than client matching, stating, “I don't have to deal with the patriarchy of business, so it's helped [to be out on my own], and now I get to be way more selective of who my clients are.” This statement in and of itself adds a layer of motivation of being able to choose who we are working with as an entrepreneur or as a business owner rather than having an organization or others tell us who we must work with. As addressed by Javadian and Modarresi (2020) and Yeager (2015), giving voice and choice to females is a feminist act, and for this select number of mompreneur participants, the act of starting one's own business is pushing against the dominant patriarchal culture.

Community. Previous work has shown that creating a community is a motivating factor for mompreneurs (Kothari, 2017). For this western, US-based study, the sense of community was a lesser motivating factor though still mentioned and discussed by those interviewed in 10 instances. There were two ways that community was a motivating factor for the mompreneurs; for some, creating community was a direct motivator for creating a business, reported with participants M11, M5, and M9. Others mentioned community as a continuing motivational factor, where the community made through their entrepreneurial venture continues to motivate them to build their business and continue their entrepreneurial work.

Those who were searching for community and decided to create it were adamant in their desires for connection continuing and driving motivation for their business. Participant M11

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stated, “I really wanted a sense of community where moms could come, and we could talk openly about birth and nursing and all the things. So that was a big motivating factor for me. I just wanted to have that community of moms and that I couldn't really find.” This mompreneur connected a business need (baby retail store) and niche (retail with a community gathering space) that she was adept in with a social need that she found lacking in her community. She goes on to state “My whole business is just like searching for a group, it's like the store was great, but really it was like searching for a community that I couldn't find or I didn't know how to find” (M11).

Participant M5's entire business is based upon creating a community for mothers and found that her own lack of finding a community space opened the idea for her to create that space with a business model of a collective work environment with childcare for mothers to converge in. M9 used her experience as a mother trying to find a supportive environment in which to do yoga as motivation to create it on her own. This mompreneur held the community aspect of her business in such high regard that initially, she offered a sliding scale on classes that included “\$10, \$5 or ‘good vibes.’ We never intentionally called it free. We would encourage people to give whatever way they could....and a review, sharing on social media, or telling friends was just as impactful, if not more so, than an actual monetary exchange.” (M9) This mompreneur’s community engagement continues to be a motivator, as she also spoke about inclusivity in her intentional social media posts and including activism in her offered trainings as her business grows.

Community support, specifically mother-based community support, appeared to be both a motivator and unintentional positive consequence of some of the businesses interviewed.

Participant M4 states that she built her business by building a reputation in the community and “I don't need to promote anymore, which is really amazing, it's all word of mouth.” She was able to develop her business as an educational advocate through her experience as both an educator and

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as a parent and through community word of mouth. Interviewee M12 had a different experience, but her business was initially built solely upon word of mouth and community involvement. This mother used her own issues with sleep and anxiety, coupled with her skills as a researcher and community involvement specialist from her previous work at an organization, to provide information and support for other mothers interested in trying CBD to help with anxiety and sleep. She shared this with her friends and found that the word of mouth was so large that she felt compelled to start the business with a mother-based focus due to the feedback she was getting. M12 shared that she had an “a-ha moment” of starting the business when a woman that she did not know came up to her at a coffee shop and stated: “Are you the pot lady?” which propelled her to realize that her small idea with gaining traction and customers through (female and mom-based) word of mouth.

Continued engagement with the community through social media and the Internet provides continued motivation for a select few entrepreneurs in their business. M7 shares that by sharing the behind-the-scenes struggles with running her printing business, she found that she engaged a larger customer base. She went on to say, “many genuine friendships have come out of it (social media),” and that her biggest priority right now is the connections she is making. M6 reports that her social media community feels like they “are really the only other people that understand exactly all the dynamics of [my] business and juggling being a mom.” She goes on to say that her continued engagement in creating a community online has boosted her cookie-making business and is now the main source of income. Community engagement has helped these businesses continue to grow and also fills a personal need for the mompreneurs.

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Covid-19

Data collection for this study took place December 2020 through February 2021, after a year of a large-scale global pandemic due to the COVID-19 virus. The United States West Coast lockdown orders were in effect from March 15th, 2020, and continued throughout data collection for this study. Research is continually being conducted about the negative effects that this pandemic and the subsequent lockdown has had on businesses, women, and mothers, resulting in a “she-cession” (Fabrizio et al., 2021). This current data speaks to mothers in business who, by simply living during a lockdown in a global pandemic, have been affected by changes to their business and the world around them (Fabrizio et al., 2021; Long, 2020). Lockdown restrictions in the states of California, Oregon, and Washington include no large gatherings over 10 people, no in-person dining, no interacting in small spaces of those who do not live in your own household, limited retail shopping, and limited movement over state lines ([covid19.ca.gov](https://www.covid19.ca.gov); [govstatus.egov.com](https://www.govstatus.egov.com); [coronavirus.wa.gov](https://www.coronavirus.wa.gov)). These restrictions are frequently changing. Other effects shown through data over this time period include a slowing down or shift in mail delivery speed and some ability to procure resources such as toilet paper, childcare, and at times some food sources (Fabrizio et al., 2021).

The data collected during this study was affected by the changes caused by the lockdown of the United States, specifically with the nature of an IPA style study, in which meaning is derived from lived experience and reported by those interviewed (Smith & Osborn, 2008). These changes were discussed by the participants as having both positive and negative repercussions and effects upon the businesses lead by the interviewed mompreneurs. These changes have a motivating effect on the participants in a multitude of ways. The mothers reported negative effects initially, except for three participants. However, all 15 participants reported a positive

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impact as well through either increased business revenue or through a shifting of services and goods offered that was created to continue a business through the shifting global times.

The negative repercussions reported from 12 of the 15 interviewees were an initial shutdown or complete halting of business procedures during the initial start of the pandemic lockdown procedures in March of 2020. These included cancellations of pre-booked activities and clients that were expected to bring revenue into the mother's business, as seen by the photographers (M10 and M3) and event planner (M1); and others had to stop for health reasons such as the cookie maker (M6) and the estheticians (M8 and M13). Others lost business or were asked to completely shut down due to gathering restrictions, as seen by the women's collective (M5), yoga collective (M9), and the retail offerings (M7 and M11). While not reporting a loss of business, M2 and M4 both reported negative repercussions on their time constraints and self-care due to an increased need for childcare and the needs of homeschooling. However, what appeared to stand out throughout 12 interviews was the verbiage of "*shifting*" and "*changing gears*" in which the mompreneurs took their previous offerings or business and were able to create a new offering to supplement their business.

Mompreneurs who had specific and clear plans for how they conduct their business and goals for the business were forced in some way to rethink how to do and provide their service(s). Interview M1 spoke about an event planning business that was modeled after traditional event planning type businesses, providing goods and set-ups for parties and larger groups of people. With the pandemic restrictions not allowing for gatherings of people, initially with no gatherings allowed and then no gatherings over 10 people, this mother chose to offer "parties in a box." She provided decorations, balloon bouquets, links to catering and local cupcakeries, and included instructions on how to set up for a party in order to make small family gatherings feel "festive

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and special.” This mother found that this intimate and exclusive type of service began to thrive during the pandemic, especially when her previous largest competitor went out of business due to the large overhead that they had from their larger scale business, which she did not have. This shifting to meet the current needs of customers was spoken about as connected to this mother's experience of feeling “like it’s my obligation – I got to get through this if they can’t...Now’s the time. I’m nimble enough to navigate this.” She spoke about seeing this opportunity as her chance to make her dream “come to fruition” (M1).

Another participant who initially had to close due to safety concerns with cooking also shifted her smaller business to include at-home offerings by providing “cookie kits where I had all of the naked cookies and provided icing and sprinkles” (M6). She then shifted into a more specific need after speaking with her social media following and thinking of her own three children's needs and was able to offer “home school education kits where they learned about color mixing and making colors ... I did a science kit on how different ingredients affect baking.” These kits became successful as she was incorporating math, science, and hands-on learning into our previous business of providing decorated cookies. Continued success for this mompreneur was found in the ability to determine what the current needs are through her own lived experience and then take that need into something that could be shared and monetized. This shifting and determining of the cultural and social need support the Hoekzema et al. (2017) study on brain changes in mothers. The grey matter shifts of a mother's brain, increasing the ability of social cognition or thinking about what is socially needed in the environment at hand and attuning to what can be offered may be a determining factor in these successful mompreneur business offerings (Hoekzema et al., 2017). This type of shift was also seen in participant M13, who provided “facials in a box” to continue supporting her family, but overall reported that “the

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pandemic brought me back to the product. I went ahead and launched the business where I make soaps and different types of body scrubs, body butters using sustainably sourced ingredients.” She goes on to say that the pandemic brought her back to passion for the product line “it was always about the products for me.” The pandemic allowed her the space, time, and need to launch that side of her business.

Other mompreneurs offering different types of services, specifically those that appear to be more service-based, found that their specialty was in demand with the rising and changing needs of a society in a worldwide pandemic and living in a lockdown. M4 found that her business in 2020 was her most monetarily successful year on record, and she called herself “a purple unicorn of a person.” M4’s service that provides educational goals, guidance, language, and school system navigation has always had a demand due to the specific niche; yet it appeared as though with children at home, parents were more attuned to the needs of their children’s deficits and thus these services were in high demand. Another industry that appeared to thrive during this pandemic was the need and desire for a mental health professional. The clinicians interviewed, a licensed practicing social worker (M2), a licensed practicing clinical counselor (M14), and a psychologist (M15), all reported an increase in service inquiries as the mental health needs of the population appeared to increase. Overall, each of the 15 mompreneurs interviewed reported that their business would continue after COVID-19 is no longer a worldwide pandemic and their perspective states are no longer in lockdown with restrictions.

Family

Family is considered a push factor for it is external and need-based, as the needs of the family unit are seen as a motivator for moving in a career direction in order to support the needs of the external whole over the personal needs. For 11 of the mompreneurs interviewed, family

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needs were seen as a driving force in motivation to go to work. Family was also seen as a hindrance in working for an organization, as the time commitment needed to support the family in the way that the participants' values dictated was not conducive to the time needs or earning potential of an organization. Family also has an internal biological connection that when building upon the work of Hoekzema et al. (2017) and can be seen as a push factor as the parents' brain is biologically connected to the needs of their offspring and thus priorities may change to accommodate that biological push (Hillerer et al., 2014; Hoekzema et al., 2017).

Family as a push factor was discussed in terms of who is the primary caregiver in the family. Eight of the 15 (53.33%) stated that they consider themselves the primary caregiver, and three of the remaining seven participants who referred to themselves as a shared caregiver only refers to themselves as a shared caregiver due to shared custody with the father of the children who they no longer cohabitate with. M2 states that she schedules her clients around the weeks and days that she has her children in her shared caregiving situation and also states that the decision to start her own business was motivated in part by wanting to be available for "dropping off and picking up my kids." Four of the seven shared caregivers also possess a graduate or doctorate degree, which may be connected to higher education possessing higher-income earning capability, as well as more ability for career mobility (Marini, 2019), and due to the earning potential, sharing caregiving may offer the mompreneur more time to earn income. No participants listed a partner as the primary caregiver.

Family as a motivator was discussed by participant M6 as she labels herself, "I am a stay-at-home mom first and foremost, and then I have my business that I do from home." This sentiment was echoed by participants M11, M3, and M7, each of which had more difficulty identifying themselves as an entrepreneur and rather labeled themselves as a *mother with a side*

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business. Participants M1, M5, M9, and M12 also reported that motivation for leaving an organization and eventually starting a business was difficulty returning to the workforce after maternity leave. M9 states “I took my maternity leave and then went back and it was just too hard for me to be away.” M12 tells a story of calling her boss the day before she was scheduled to return from her second maternity leave, crying into the phone, stating that she could not go back to work at that time (later she does discuss how she does not like being a stay-at-home mom). When this shift in priorities or desire is looked at through the lens of biological brain shifts (Hillerer et al., 2014; Hoekzema et al., 2017) it can be argued that the act of having a child creates a different perspective and motivation on a biological level, making the family the priority over the self and over an outside organization, pushing one into making changes for the perceived betterment of the family unit.

Pull Factors

Pull factors tend to be more internal or even personality and values-based. As discussed by Fayolle et al., (2014) values are developed by both the culture and one's family of origin as well as once lived experience. Pull factors have been listed as being internally or drive motivated and have been linked to traditional male entrepreneurial motivation studies (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Shastri et al., 2019). The findings in the current study show strong adherence to internally driven pull factors for starting a business after having a child. The pull factors have been categorized into two major themes: *work-life balance* and *identity*. Each of these themes contains subthemes that make up the larger themes under the pull factors.

Work-life balance

The mothers discussed that a motivation for leaving an organization, as well as an internal motivation for balancing the stress of motherhood, was to start their own business. This

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allowed the participants the ability to feel as though they're not competing between the demands of the organization and the demands of motherhood, but rather they had control over setting the boundaries between work and family. These specifically presented themselves in two ways, their own *self-care* and the feeling of *control* over their own *time*. These have been considered pull factors for this research as they adhered to the findings of Kirkwood (2009), in which the need for control over one's time while coinciding with the needs of the family, is driven more by the internal discomfort caused when one feels their time needs are being externally dictated by others.

Time and control. Time was referred to in a multitude of ways, from commute to hours away from my home. Time can be seen as a factor of income when one looks at the value of one's work and earnings versus the hours of time it takes to earn a certain amount of money (Barba-sánchez & Atienza-sahuquillo, 2017; Carsrud & Brännback, 2011). Time and having control or flexibility with one's time were discussed by all 15 mothers as a motivating factor for starting their own business.

Flexibility appears to be a strong motivator in the decision of the mother to leave an organization. In 14 of the 15 interviews, the participant spoke specifically about the inflexibility of working for an organization. This can be seen as specific hours one must be at a desk, "clock-in and clock-out" type of schedules, or the need to work weekends or late in order to perform needed job duties. The participants stated that when deciding upon a foray into an entrepreneurial venture, the flexibility of their time was an important factor. M4 stated that after the birth of her first child, "I went back to teaching full-time for a period. It was brutal. I was commuting, dropping off at daycare 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM, picking her up, putting her to bed, for a year. And it just wasn't sustainable." M4 went on to add of her current mompreneur career "the

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beautiful part is I can work whenever....” The flexibility of choosing one’s own schedule allows for the mompreneur to attend functions with their children, accommodate school schedules, and underlyingly increase the feeling of a positive work-life balance and thus increase the happiness of the mother (Hardy et al., 2018). Mothers spoke about feeling “pulled” by organizational needs. They also spoke about feeling “pulled” by their child's needs. This discomfort and lack of control or flexibility over one’s schedule was not conducive for a mother's well-being in these participants. The ability to shape one's own day and working schedule while still taking hours away from the family eased that discomfort and created a more harmonious family and work-life balance.

The amount of time at work balanced with time with the family was seen as an indicator of happiness for the participants. However, time for the business was discussed as being needed for an entrepreneurial venture, sometimes at a higher rate, so the number of hours at work did not appear to be the deciding factor for creating a work-life balance that was harmonious with the family. It appeared to depend more upon the flexibility of the hours that created the feelings of a strong work-life balance, thus making it a push or internal factor. Participant M10 stated, “I try and balance my family time as much as I can because it's really important to have our sit-down dinners and still be as much of a mom and schedule as much as I can, but I have these other things that fill my cup.” M10 is referencing how making her own schedule allows for her to do what “fills my [identity] cup” which is her profession, and also being a participant every day in her children's lives which allows for harmonious work-life balance. She also goes on to state that when you add the hours up, she does end up working full time, “but it's all from home, and it's all my own hours. So that's really great.” Participant M4 reports that flexibility was an integral factor in shifting to her own business, stating, “I just realized I didn't have the bandwidth, and I

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wanted to be present for my daughter. I think that was what gave me kind of a kick in the pants to have this flexibility... And if I decided I don't want to work today, I don't have to work today.” The ultimate idea of having flexibility parallels the humans’ desire for control over their own lives. The feeling or perception that one controls their decisions and day-to-day actions and thus has some control in their own destiny has been shown to increase feelings of contentment, happiness, and overall well-being (Dijkhuizen et al., 2018).

An area of discomfort that was discussed as previously hindering a work-life balance and time with the family was the commute and need to be in an office space away from the family on somebody else’s time. Participant M11 recalled her previous commute to work, stating that “commuting takes a toll because it's just wasted time ... I [was] in the car anywhere from two to four hours a day.” Participant M1 stated that her decision to leave an organization played out in her own internal dialogue with a job that she enjoyed, but she continued to ask herself, “You're going to tell me what hours I've got to come in and help you. I have a family, and that really doesn't work for me.” This enmeshing of one’s own desires and needs with the needs of the family as a whole appeared throughout the interviews and supports that the needs of the family tend to translate to an internal motivation as one begins to take on the needs of the family as the needs of oneself. How this mother identity is used as motivation is further discussed under the theme of *mother identity*.

The idea of time and control, which many times was referred to as flexibility, appeared to be a strong motivating factor in the mompreneurs’ decision to start a business after leaving an organization. M5 stated, “I didn't necessarily want to stay home with my kids full time. Maybe I wanted a part-time gig or something that was more flexible. I definitely built my own business for flexibility. And although it's way more work, it's flexible.” She summarizes that the idea of

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control over one's time in and of itself is motivation, even over the content or actual hours spent at work.

Self-care. The care of oneself has been seen as a predictor of happiness as well as a factor in entrepreneurial success, as the happier one is the higher life satisfaction, and this can translate to job performance and satisfaction (Dijkhuizen et al., 2018). Self-care is unique to the individual and can include breaks, time management, and even declining requests or clients (Hardy et al., 2018). Participants in this study listed the ability to bring in and prioritize self-care due to more flexibility when starting their own business as a motivating factor.

Participant M3 goes so far as to say having her own ability to manage her own schedule as she sees fit for the family has been a savior, as she discussed how having the flexibility to work at night and take care of her child in the day has increased her satisfaction in life which "has saved us a lot." The idea of "saving" the family through self-care can be seen in other interviews through the lens of how a mother taking care of her own needs allows for that mother to be more present to the family. Participant M5 states, "if work is filling [me] up, the parts of [me] that my kids are getting are way better than an entire day where you're miserable." This mother discussed an emotional breaking point while attempting to work at an organization, also stating, "I would always come back [to my boss] and try to reinvent the wheel because I was so desperate for some sense of balance." M10 echoes the sentiment by stating, "I really try and balance my time as much as I can, and then I think if what I'm doing is good for me. Good for me translates to good for the family."

Participants did discuss conscious focus on setting boundaries in order to increase their self-care. Participant M8 stated, "I had to train myself to not contact my clients back if they're texting me at 10:00 PM At night because I would just want to." She shares that she has had to

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buy a locked case with a timer in order to prioritize her own downtime and self-care. This desire to constantly be working was echoed by participant M15, who stated, “I do feel more compelled to respond right away to all the pieces of the business, whether it be a patient or a business aspect of the company.” Her struggle to find a balance between caring for the self and caring for the business was found in each of the 15 participants, yet each shared that they're happier putting the time into their own business and have a better ability to prioritize self-care. M5 described this increased happiness due to “I don't feel like I'm letting anyone down because it's my own.”

Identity

Identity as a motivation stems from one's own internal belief systems, personality, and sense of self, driving the mother to start an entrepreneurial venture (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011). Identity in the form of personal drive and desire for success is a major pull factor in traditional entrepreneurial motivation studies (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Kirkwood, 2009; Patrick et al., 2016), and this current study also found this to be the most prevalent motivation for the mompreneurs. Identity was divided into subthemes defined as *personal identity*, *entrepreneurial identity*, and *mother experience and identity*. Each of these sub-themes had further subthemes that will be discussed, such as *impostor syndrome* under the entrepreneurial identity and *guilt* and *role modeling* under the mother experience and identity.

Personal Identity

Personal identity was discussed by the participants as an internal drive to obtain an identity that they felt proud of or that they felt was meaningful. The discussion of feeling motivated to build something unique or to fulfill a dream was discussed by participant M5 as a large motivator for her female collective business:

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I think that when you work for someone else, when you're building somebody else's dream, it's really draining. And then they tell you, hey, you need to be on a Sunday night because we've got this call and you're like, [expletive removed] you. Like I have a life. When your business says, hey, you have to show up on Sunday because somebody wants to pay you to rent your space. Sure as hell I'm going to show up on a Sunday! You know, it's a very different - it's just a different thing. You're showing up for yourself. You're not showing up for someone else. (M5)

She goes on to state that she finds a large sense of fulfillment in her business, which drives her to continue to push forward though she is currently not bringing in a significant profit. She goes on to state: "It's not all about your kids. It's not. It's about you. It's about showing up as you are to figure out who you want to become and who you are, who you want to be." This type of internal drive for fulfillment is an internal personal motivator and was mentioned by many participants. M13 discussed that she started her esthetician and product business after feeling that it fulfilled her desire to help others. She states:

I feel like *calling* is the right word to use. Doing something that kind of helps people is what makes me feel happy ... I always had a feeling of wanting to involve myself in something that was a little more meaningful. (M13)

M11 describes her motivation to run her retail and community collective business as her "passion." These internal type motivators are based solely on the pull of one's own internal desires and the need to have them come to fruition, and thus a personal identity motivation.

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Mother experience and identity

A specific and unique motivation identified by participants is the actual act of becoming a mother being a motivation for starting one's business. The act of being a mother has been identified by participants as a consistent and constant shifting and need to figure out what is needed at the moment and shift to manage that need. This flexibility in thinking and ability to problem solve at the moment has been identified by Croom and Miller (2018) as an indicator of entrepreneurial motivation or success and has been discussed as an adaptive thinking strategy of mompreneurs (Ekinsmyth, 2014).

Participant M1 describes her move into starting her own business has been motivated, and even inspired, by motherhood, stating “I think there's a piece about being a mom that puts you in a place where all of a sudden you go ‘I can do these really hard things maybe I can do other hard things.’” She goes on to state that “I felt like if I could have a baby and keep them alive like I could do anything.” Participant M3 states, “I think motherhood prepared me with my business to expect the unexpected.” And participant M6 echoes this sentiment by stating, “if motherhood has taught me anything, it has taught me the ability to multitask and think on my feet and just kind of expect the unexpected and just be prepared for that.” She goes on to state that the act of motherhood and the act of having to shift once “you've got a handle on something” has helped with her business’ success. These exemplify how the mompreneurs are motivated by their belief in themselves to weather change and the unknown due to weathering the ups and downs of motherhood.

Another theme about the mother experience that motivated participants to start a business was the idea that being a mom allowed a depth of thinking that was not available to them prior to motherhood. M14 states, “before I became a mom, I don't know, it was a different way of

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thinking, and now that I'm a mom, there's a different priority. I feel like it's helped me be more compassionate in my work.” This sentiment was echoed by M2, who states that she felt that the depth of character and experience that she had by being a mother and through her divorce has allowed her to be a more compassionate therapist. And to put it bluntly, participant M8 states that having a child “definitely it lit a fire under my [expletive deleted] as it wasn't just about me.”

Though these seem to be on different ends of the spectrum, they are connected. One motivation is life experience giving a specific set of skills and depth of character to offer something to clients. The other is being motivated by having another person or another being that is dependent upon your earning potential and work ethic, but more so, it is a shift in one's own character where priority is not just the self, but the priority is another's well-being. Yet each of these changes is an internal shift caused by the act of becoming a mother.

Guilt. The phrase “mom guilt” elicited reactions from participants, ranging from a strong association to frustration about the term in general. The guilt associated with being a mom as a motivator is discussed in the previous work of Foley et al. (2018) as an inherent feeling that one is not doing enough for the family, and this can be perpetuated by outside cultural expectations (Croom & Miller, 2018). The idea of beginning an entrepreneurial venture to reduce mom guilt is not supported by the data presented in this study. The majority of participants discussed that the feelings of guilt are still present, yet the feelings of accomplishment through starting a business allow for those feelings of guilt to be better managed. Participant M10 states, “I try and keep a really nice balance as much as I possibly can so that even when I am away and feel that guilt, I'm like, but I'll be home for dinner tonight, so that's OK. I just try and go with that, so I can feel good about where I am.”

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The participants that spoke about guilt tended to follow up the feelings of guilt with a modifier about being a role model. Participant M 11 states, “I always kind of think about that when I do have mom guilt. At the end of the day, my kids see that I'm independent, then I can do this on my own.” Overall, the findings did not support that guilt was a large factor in leaving an organization, and starting ones' own mompreneurial business continued to perpetuate feelings of guilt yet was able to be combatted with feelings of pride.

Role modeling. Participants discussed how motherhood propelled and motivated them into starting a business, yet they continue to feel guilt around working. This appeared to be soothed by the identified motivational factor of being a role model for their children. Participant M1 states, “I feel highly motivated for my kids, I don't really know why it's like women can do stuff and you're going to see that your mom can do it too.” She also goes on to state, “it's good to just show them that you can, and if you work hard at something, you can do it, you know.” Finding the meaning and finding the mix of identities of being a mom and a worker and bringing in the identity of being a role model allows for these women to continue to do what they are doing and push themselves forward through some of the harder pieces of the guilt that goes along with time away from the family. The role model aspect appears to be a strong reframe used, as described in the feminist perspective of Carrigan and Dubeley (2013) where the mothers can take something that may cause discomfort within, such as time away from family, and look at it through a different lens and change it to become a driving or motivating factor.

For some subjects, the role model identity coincides with personal identity as a motivation. Participant M12 states that she finds showing her daughter that she works hard and is creating her own business the strong motivator to keep going. M12 states, “I keep it going, I would say, because I want to show her that, I actually want to normalize that a mom and a

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woman can be, and maybe should be, working.” Participant M15 also reports a conscious motivation to be a role model for her children. She shares the following story:

“She [my daughter] also has asked me, ‘Who is your boss?’ And I'm like ‘oh I'm my boss.’ And she's like, ‘yeah, but who's your boss?’ And I'm like, ‘No, no, no. I am the boss. I'm the boss of me. I'm the boss of everybody.’ So yes, it is very intentional around being that kind of role model for my kids, not just my daughter, also my son, but I want to empower her.” (M15)

Echoing the work of Yeager (2015) in which she supports the female entrepreneur as inherently empowering, for it allows women to show and tell their own story, the participants in this study also appeared to find value in being a living example.

Entrepreneur Identity

An identity discussed in traditional entrepreneurial motivation studies is the underlying identification as an independent person or entrepreneur from either a young age or from a working-age due to a high desire for independence and personal success (Fayolle et al., 2014; Jaén & Liñán, 2013). The participants in the current study shared that their entrepreneurial spirit and motivation came more from lived experience. However, when assigning meaning to the participant interviews, there appeared to be an inherent identity or identification for success in independence, much like previous studies have shown (Fayolle et al., 2014; Jaén & Liñán, 2013). Participant M14 is an example of an inherent desire for independence. She states: “I need to be in control of everything that happens professionally, and I don't like working under someone or under a business because I feel like there's always something that I don't agree with.” She further discusses is that she likes to control her own business, money, and time and that she feels frustrated or unagreeable when she's working under somebody else.

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Equating the word entrepreneurial with the idea of freedom and control appeared in a number of the interviews as well. Two participants shared that they find happiness and contentment in being their own boss. Participant M3 states, “I feel like there is nothing better than being your own boss- it's literally one of the hardest jobs ever next to motherhood. But the reward that comes out of it is exponentially greater.” Participant M6 equates being an entrepreneur with freedom, stating that it not only “provides an income, it provides an outlet for me, but I can do it on my own terms, and I don't know very many other things that I could do that would allow me that kind of freedom.”

Traditional entrepreneurial motivations are connected with the idea of freedom and agency, and it has been stated that an entrepreneurial personality type tends to have a strong need for control in making their own decisions (Fayolle et al., 2014). The participants in this study echoed that desire and motivation for agency in their own lives, possibly made stronger by the participants' inability to conform to traditional organizational needs, thus creating a stronger desire for autonomy and control in one's life. This desire for agency through one's entrepreneurial venture is discussed by M8: “I wouldn't have it any other way. Just having that control over my life, with such little control, I feel like it's my sanity, and it's the one thing that I get to make all the decisions about. And good or bad, they're mine.”

Under the entrepreneurial identity as a motivator, a trend was found of the participants speaking about thinking strategies that they used to shift and change their business as the environment around them changed. This appears to coincide with the idea of a mompreneur employing an adaptive thinking strategy when running her business, which is an internal motivator driven by seeing the need for change and being motivated to find a solution (Ekinsmyth, 2014). This coincides with an entrepreneurial identity, as an entrepreneur finds a

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way and a motivation to create a business where there is a need (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011).

Participants such as M9 spoke about “you have a constant pivot, constant having to figure it out,” she spoke about this while sharing the changes to her yoga studio during the pandemic that, in the end, created more revenue than she had seen prior. This was also discussed by the mothers when they shared the inception of their business, such as participant M1 who stated that she would not have come up with her party planning idea was it not for planning her own children's parties and finding enjoyment in it, as well as not finding all the materials that she needed easily accessible.

Imposter Syndrome. The term “impostor syndrome” is a psychological experience of feeling as though one cannot perform intellectually or professionally and was coined in 1978 by Clance and Imes (Mak et al., 2019). The participants alluded to feeling as though they are “faking it” or not fully qualified for the task or job at hand. From a feminist perspective, impostor syndrome can be exacerbated by the patriarchal nature of the dominant culture and language in traditional entrepreneurial ideas and literature (Javadian & Modarresi, 2020; Ludovico, 2017). Each participant that was interviewed had an independently started business that was financially bringing in profit or paying for itself, and each had been operating for over one year independently. Throughout multiple readings and theme discovery, it was found that the idea of being labeled an entrepreneur, or a business owner elicited a reaction that could be categorized under the definition of impostor syndrome (Mak et al., 2019). Participant M5 directly addresses this by stating that the title of entrepreneur has a male connotation to it and that it is “very dominant for men, but I think that owning the entrepreneurial title, while difficult, may be a key to success ... If you are running a small business and you don't consider yourself entrepreneurial, you may be playing small, as a woman.” Putting words to this brings focus into

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how culture and the environment in which we were raised in the US culture has formed our opinions and our own self-identification and even self-worth (Ludovico, 2017).

Participants tended to speak in a somewhat self-deprecating tone when asked about the label of an entrepreneur. Participant M7 stated, but after having an independently operating business for over 5 years, that she would still call herself “a stay-at-home mom. And then if it came up, I would be like, ‘well I have this little business on the side and whatever.’” Participant M3 stated when asked if she would define herself as an entrepreneur: “It took me quite a long time to be OK with that term for myself ... Even after a year or two in business that was successful and thriving, it took me a long time for me to be able to own that.” Other moms, such as M2, stated that she did not feel “very entrepreneurial” due to the fact that she is running a business that has already existed by being a private practice therapist. M6 stated, “it's still very hard for me to consider myself an entrepreneur and find the line between a hobby and a business.” It does appear that the defining factor of when a participant is able to remove the impostor syndrome type feelings is through profit and time. M9 states, “it's taken a while, but I think it's just been this past year which really set in because before it was just so much fun.” M9's business has grown over this past year to make a profit through adding an online component, as well as the perspective opening of a second location.

While impostor syndrome is not an overt motivator, it is listed under a subtheme of entrepreneurial identification as it was so prevalent in the interviews, with 13 of the 15 (86.67%) interviewed showing some connection to feeling as though they were not an entrepreneur despite owning a business. It also shows a marked counterexample to the participants' pride in being a role model for their children.

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Push and pull conclusion

Participants shared motivational factors from each side, both external and internal, driving the mothers to start a business. Contrary to previous research, those who participated in this study did appear to favor the pull factors, specifically internal identity as a motivator to start a business after childhood (Patrick et al., 2016), as seen by the number of references provided. There did appear to be a common thread throughout both push and pull factors, tying them together as a bigger theme, which will be discussed as the need for *identity synthesis*.

Identity Synthesis

Underlying the raw data collected was a common thread of various identities that each participant identifies with and is attempting to synthesize within themselves. As seen in the psychosocial research from Erikson (1963) and Marcia (1966, 1988), humans are faced with a plethora of identities placed upon them from internal factors, cultural, and environmental factors in which they are constantly attempting to find meaning through conflict reduction. In the current cultural climate, women are faced with having to be both a “perfect” mother as well as a contributing member of the workforce (Verniers & Vala, 2018). For many mothers, these identities are at odds with each other, creating dissonance and, in some ways, an inability to feel happy or productive with either identity without a synthesis (Ludovico, 2017; Marcia, 1988; Verniers & Vala, 2018). For the women interviewed in this research, the act of becoming a mompreneur has an ability to heal the dissonance within the self by creating work that not only allows one to be a mother but thrives because one is a mother. Motherhood and work become symbiotic, thus synthesizing opposing identities that were once at odds.

According to the teachings of Marcia (1966), identity synthesis occurs in young adulthood, with the final stage being Identity Achievement. Marcia continued to shift his work to

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include a continual process of identity formation after achieving identity due to cultural and other psychosocial factors (1988). Under this theoretical perspective, the participants have been thrust into a new stage of identity formation after becoming a mother, as the worker identity, once fully formed, no longer offers synchronicity within the self, which causes internal discomfort in the psyche (Valde, 1996). As studied in the work of Croom and Miller (2018), the cultural identity of the “good mother” that selflessly nurtures and always puts a child first and the needs of the family first clashes with the organizational identity of a “good” worker who puts the needs of the organization and the business first in her life. With these conflicting internal identities, two selves (the mother and the worker) are at odds with each other creating internal friction as well as temporal friction, as one cannot be with the family and also with the business at all times (Croom & Miller, 2018; Hall, 1972; Ludovico, 2017; Marcia, 1988). The use and identification of the word “good” in both of these identity categories put a value judgment before these identities that also causes conflict, as “good mother” and “good worker” cannot live or coexist in the same temporal space as both are the “good” identity (Croom & Miller, 2018). The value judgment of good inherently means that if one is not achieving that identity, they are not “good” and possibly “bad.” The internal feelings of being “bad” when one identifies or strives to be “good” can cause strong identity conflict and discomfort (Erikson, 1963; Marcia, 1966, 1988). Consequently, when one is good at one of the identities, they are by nature of the description being bad at the other identity, which increases discomfort within the self (Ludovico, 2017; Verniers & Vala, 2018).

This identity battle was addressed by interview M5 when this mother felt a pull to consistently shift her schedule at work. She spoke of the internal conversation she was having at that time in her life: “I’ll leave at this time, I’ll work on this weekend, and further” in order to

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reduce the discomfort of not being good at both the mother and the worker identity. The result caused this mother to feel “terrible” at all identities, a mother and a worker. This participant describes this as a “dark time,” also stating that she had a struggle with postpartum depression fueled by feelings of inadequacy. Though guilt was not found to be a strong motivator for leaving an organization, and in fact, it stayed with the mothers during their entrepreneurial ventures, guilt was most acute when flexibility was compromised, and the organizational needs were considered over the needs of the family. This guilt continued in the entrepreneurial venture but at a lesser extent and a more tolerable level. It is possible that the synthesis of having more flexibility, ownership, and control of ones’ schedule coupled with income and supporting one’s identity as a strong worker and achiever allows for a clean identity synthesis that reduces the discomfort of the conflicting identities. As stated by M5, “(Being an entrepreneur) it is the most [expletive deleted] fulfilling thing you will ever do. I don’t care who you are, what your dream is, what your ideas are, chase them and keep going.”

The motivation to remove oneself from discomfort appears throughout each interview in different ways. Some are ethical discomforts, as seen in the interviews of M2 and M14, who both felt as though the job that they were performing for an organization was not aligning with their own ethical needs:

M14: I don’t like working under someone or under a business because I feel like there is always something I don’t agree with.

Others purely were not able to find purpose in their work at an organization after finding a different purpose in motherhood, as seen in M5 and M12:

M12: I was intense about going up that ladder, but having kids, like, after she was born and then really like after being with her, you know, your priorities change.

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Others were purely uncomfortable with the time away from their children and how it increased their level of guilt that they were not performing as a mother as seen in M1 and M11:

M11: I wanted something where I could be more present in their lives and be able to be home on weekends and just be a mom – more than just working and commuting.

And yet others are uncomfortable without a focus and a purpose outside of motherhood as seen in M6 and M9, and though motherhood was joyful, it did not serve their own working womanhood identity and thus they felt an emptiness or loss that motherhood could not fill:

M6: I definitely feel like if I wasn't doing this I would have found something else creatively for me to have as a hobby. I would have been doing something.

Synthesizing the identities of mother and worker allows for the removal of that discomfort and the healing of that discomfort and thus becomes an overarching motivator for these participants in becoming mompreneurs.

Identity synthesis as the underlying motivator for mompreneurs also adheres to the fluidity of the push and pull factors as they overlapped multiple times. Themes such as *time* which was coded under a pull factor, and the higher theme of *work-life balance* also had some overlap with why people left *organizations* or more of a push or *environmental* type theme or motivation. While each factor and theme seemed to be a part or make up the large tapestry of why a mother would start her own business, the underlying motivation of reducing discomfort and being ones' authentic true self appeared to weave its way through all 15 interviews in some way or another. This personal type of motivation continually overlaps with the family motivation as the participants want to see themselves as *good mom*, *good worker*, *ethical person*, and *good member of the community*. M12 shares how she was no longer able to identify with the person she was before becoming a mother and felt unfulfilled:

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I did what I thought you were supposed to do, I rose the ranks and climbed the ladder and was always gunning for that next thing. And by the end, about halfway through or so, I was running my own department, but then I started to get kind of bored with what I was doing which was really weird. I mean they kept telling you, you're supposed to go up the ladder, but the further up the ladder you get, the further away from the actual tangible work that's being done. The more strategic you get...but it wasn't where my sweet spot was. (M12)

The idea of achieving the authentic self as a motivator coincides with identity synthesis.

Participant M1 stated that by being an entrepreneur, “you can be yourself,” which was echoed by M12, who states that by fully embracing her business side and her mother side, she can “just be myself” while reaching business and community-based goals. To place identity synthesis in a motivational context, as the findings show that this may be the most underlying common motivator for a mother to leave an organization or start her own business independently, identity synthesis is the easing or removal of discomfort. The discomfort caused by organizational demands from a patriarchal perspective, things such as the need to be in the office, putting the organizational needs above the familial needs, and not allowing for motherhood to be an identity within the organizational structure, can create overwhelming discomfort for the mother in all areas of her life, permeating the home life as well as the work-life. Discomfort has been shown to cause decision fatigue and a decrease in performance and overall happiness (Dijkhuizen et al., 2018). The feeling of authenticity was addressed by the participants when feeling they are truly able to be themselves while providing or doing something that they like to do. As stated by almost all the participants, they are not the type who want to be stay-at-home moms (“I’d rather

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be working than being a full-time mom.” (M15)), and being an entrepreneur allows them that synthesis to just be themselves.

Overlapping themes

When looking at the coding and the specific areas of overlap where phrases were coded in both a push and a pull higher theme convergence or motivator, the biggest motivator that overlapped was *organizations* with several factors (*entrepreneurial identity, mother experience, personal identity, and time and control*). It appears as though what is unappealing or not conducive about working in an organization is a motivator for these mompreneurs to start their own business, thus coinciding with the literature that moms and women, in general, tend to have strong push and pull motivational factors when looking at becoming an entrepreneur (Shastri et al., 2019). These external factors of organizations pushing women into creating their own business may be attributed to the synthesis of women looking at the needs of the family as their own identity needs (Kirkwood, 2009; Shastri et al., 2019) and the ability of the female brain to change after childbirth and increase the social cognition awareness (Hillerer et al., 2014; Hoekzema et al., 2017). When one’s brain shifts to support the biological connection to another human being, their needs may become a part of one’s own needs (Hoekzema et al., 2017), thus making some motivations both an internal and external motivator. Organizational needs fall to the wayside due to the internal pull of the family needs because the needs of the family coincide so much with the desires of the individual. Though these push factors seem to be high motivators, as the data show, there also are inherent pull factors such as an identity as an entrepreneur and a personal motivation to do something outside of being a mother that pushes these women to start a business of their own. Participant M12 states, “in terms of forming the business, I think I just honestly, I think I just didn’t want to be a stay-at-home mom. And then I

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didn't want to go back to the corporate world.” This is both a push motivator away from organizational needs and a pull factor for her internal desire to be personally fulfilled.

As found in traditional entrepreneurial research on motivation, income can be both a push and pull factor. As quoted before, M2 has stated, “that's what made me motivated to expand my business, I really recognized that I just needed even more flexibility, and I really need to make more money and work less hours.” She goes on to state that when you're working for an organization, there appears to be “just such a limit on how much money you're going to make per hour, whereas with my own business, I feel like it's sort of exponential like it's up to me to decide if I'm really ready to charge more.” This overlap of both the push and pull need has been discussed in previous work as a trend in female motivation to start a business (Shastri et al., 2019). As the participant is able to decide within herself how much her own worth as a provider is and is not adhere it to the organizational cap or ceiling creating a strong internal motivation; but also the outside factors of needing more flexibility to be with her children and to work fewer hours to do her best as a single mother created motivation as well. She goes on to state that she desires to “take them on trips ... I mean I just want to have a good life for myself, and part of it is being sure that my kids are happy.” Her happiness is intertwined with the happiness of her children, creating both a push and pull motivator simultaneously.

Constraints

A place of constraint in the current study is the number of participants interviewed. While 15 is an adequate sample size according to other similar IPA semi-structured interview qualitative studies (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Shastri et al., 2019; Tasnim et al., 2014); a higher number of participants allows for more data and a richer ability to code and find themes across a wide breadth of participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008). The location

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of the study could also affect the results, as each participant who was interviewed does live on the western side of the United States and in higher socio-economic communities, as seen by the spread of participants throughout larger cities in California, Oregon, and Washington. A further study could be done including women from other parts of the United States, and a comparing and contrasting of the results could be done.

Another area of constraint in the findings of this study is found in the limited identified ethnic demographics. A number of entrepreneurial groups for women and mothers of color were reached out to for an interview, yet there was a limited engagement or interest in being interviewed, and in this data set, only one woman of color was able to participate in the interview process and study. A more comprehensive study would include more women of color, at least 25%, to mirror the demographics in the last US census (obtained from <http://www.census.gov>). This sample also fails to reflect the demographics of women of color who are entrepreneurs. According to data, in December of 2020, 64% of women-owned businesses are started by women of color (Sheperd, 2020). These data points highlight that a large shortcoming of this particular study is the lack of diversity in the participants.

Constraints or effects that also are addressed are the current COVID-19 outbreak, though this was included in the discussion and findings. The COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent shutting down of many businesses and childcare facilities created a lot of shifting and changes forced upon many businesses (Long, 2020). It was discussed that many women in the workforce and women-run businesses shut down at a higher level than male-run businesses (Fabrizio et al., 2021), and childcare facilities were also forced to close their doors to accommodate the pandemic lockdown causing more women to leave the workforce to care for young children (Fabrizio et al., 2021; Long, 2020). While important to discuss this as a factor in the data, the

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data also attempts to adequately reflect the current times by asking the participants about their experiences during the pandemic. 14 of the 15 interviewed stated that the COVID-19 pandemic created new business ventures and new ideas that they were able to provide to their clients or saw an uptick in businesses, which may not be indicative of the larger population in the US, as seen by other data provided from the US overall (Fabrizio et al., 2021; Long, 2020).

Implications

Implications from this study for further research include both within organizational interest and further entrepreneurial interest. For within organizational research, the data collected are of interest to further discern what motivates a mother who needs or enjoys the act of working to stay in the organizational workforce. Further phenomenological studies can be developed on how to support and keep women in the organizational workforce, as the participants all discussed a need and desire to work, as seen by the large identity pull factor, yet their needs were not being met by the organizations that they once worked for. This type of research could be of interest as working-age females make up 58.3% of the population (<http://www.census.gov>), and mothers make up 32% of the female workforce, or 23.5 million workers (<http://www.census.gov>). To gainfully and consistently employ women, specifically mothers, is to support a large portion of the US economy and population. This research allows for a holistic approach to understanding the needs of this population, as IPA research derives meaning from the population being researched (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008) and allows the women to speak for themselves (Yeager, 2015).

An area of specific interest that could be used in organizational development is the definition and meaning behind what a flexible work environment means for a mother in an organization. As supported in these findings, a large motivator for starting one's own business

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was flexibility and flexible hours that allow the mother to synthesize the identity of being a caring parent and a successful working woman (Dijkhuizen et al., 2018; Ludovico, 2017). Flexibility in where a mother can work was discussed by M12 where she allows her employees to work “at a bar if they want.” Albeit shared in a jovial tone, more specifically, this mother stated that her organization is creating space for mothers to work by giving more project-based type work and conceptualizing the business in an outcome-based system, allowing for the workers to choose where, when, and how they complete their tasks. This frees up the worker from feeling the need to be somewhere at a certain time and leave at a certain time, not allowing for the flexibility of being there for a family need in the middle of the day and possibly going back to work at night. Outcome-based working environments appear to foster the needs of the mother (Dijkhuizen et al., 2018; Rehman & Roomi, 2012), and more research could be done on specific needs that a woman and mother would need to feel as though she was truly involved in a flexible work environment and thus motivated to stay at an organization.

While possibly seen as a constraint as discussed, the pandemic and subsequent lockdown is also an area of interest for further data collection on entrepreneurs and specifically on mother entrepreneurs as studied in this research project. As seen in previous research, mompreneurs have been shown to be adept at seeing a social need or a business niche and using their specific abilities to fill that need and provide a service or business (Edralin, 2012; Ekinsmyth, 2014; Foley et al., 2018). With the needed shifts from COVID-19, sometimes shutting down big businesses as discussed by participant M1, this allowed for the smaller business to fill that hole on a smaller scale and thrive during this pandemic, at times showing an increase in revenue and sales. Further research on the number of mother-started businesses during this unprecedented time would be of interest. This new interest (After COVID-19, perhaps?) is an area of need, and

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other areas of research are still presenting themselves as the conclusion of this lockdown and pandemic had still not occurred at the conclusion of this current research.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Discerning specific unique motivators for the mompreneur subset is on a moving spectrum, dependent on both internal and external factors. The current data collected shows that the entrepreneurial motivators are divided between push and pull factors as seen by the mother participants stating that environmental push factors, such as organizations and family needs are high motivators, as well as internal pull factors of identity and work-life balance causing a motivation to start a business. The most uniquely defined motivator found is identity synthesis and how the removal of discomfort in one's life is a motivator for entrepreneurial ventures (Marcia, 1988; Verniers & Vala, 2018). This discomfort has both pull and push aspects as it is a mix of environment and cultural pieces of one's own identity, family needs, desire and dreams, income, and overall, all motivators working together and finding synthesis within oneself to give space and opportunity to best meet those needs (Verniers & Vala, 2018).

This population has demonstrated that while each business and participant is unique, there are also commonalities between the mompreneurs. Each participant discusses their own needs along with the needs of their children with equal fervor, and also were able to discuss how child-rearing and adapting to motherhood has been a learning piece in the development of creating one's own business. Another apparent similarity is the connection that the participants stated about having to adapt and “pivot” during the worldwide pandemic and implications that this had on business and how being a mother also requires the same set of skills of shifting and pivoting as new needs arise that one is not in control of. The underlying connection of all the mompreneurs interviewed may be this duality of simultaneously being able to let go of control while also continually being in control of one's tasks and future. As stated by M5, “I am building this thing, and I have big aspirations, and I have big hopes, and I have big dreams, and I am also

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a mom, and I'm also a woman." She is describing her ability through her entrepreneurial process of being able to own all her identities and thus finding her contentment. M5, like all interviewed participants, when asked if she would go back to working for an organization, stated, "There's no part of me that would...go back to my corporate job. I would just find a different dream to chase." The melding of her reality of motherhood, entrepreneurial spirit, and womanhood, with the melding of making her dreams a part of this reality, is a true motivator to continue on the entrepreneurial path.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Statement (public post):

Hello, I am beginning my dissertation research and I'm looking for women to interview. Please share this public post or contact me if you would be interested in participating.

Recruitment statement:

I am conducting my doctoral research on the motivations of Mompreneurs in the United States to complete my doctorate in human and organizational psychology at Touro University Worldwide. I am looking for women who have started and continued to lead an independent business after the birth of their child(ren) who would be willing to be interviewed for research purposes. This interview would be conducted by myself over Zoom and would take 45 minutes to an hour of your time. The interview audio will be recorded for research purposes. For your participation you will be compensated with a \$10.00 gift certificate to a coffee shop of your choice that offers online e-gift certificates.

This research will be used as data in one of the first mompreneur studies to be conducted in the US. Please contact me at LaurenOgrenMFT@gmail.com if you are interested and meet the required criteria. The 1st 14 women who meet criteria will be offered to participate in the study.

Thank you,

Lauren Ogren, M.A.

Appendix B

Purpose statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to discover the varying motivations of Mompreneurs, which for the purpose of this study is defined as women who have started an independent business after childbirth. This study will include interviews of a minimum of twelve individual mompreneurs, each having started a unique business venture.

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Appendix D

Demographic questions

Demographic Data

Please fill out as best you can

How many children do you have?

1 – 2- 3- 4- 5+

Your Age? _____

Type of Business? _____

Location of Business (State)? _____

Education Level (highest met)?

High School – Some College – Vocational Degree – Undergrad Degree (BA, BS, AA) –
Graduate Degree or Higher

Ethnicity?

American Indian or Alaskan Native – Asian – Black or African American – Hispanic/Latino –
Pacific Islander – White – Other

Marital Status?

Married/Domestic Partner – Single – Separated – Divorced - Widowed

Appendix E

Semi-structured interview questions

- 1) How many years have you been a mother?
 - a. How many children do you have, and what are the ages?
 - b. Do you consider yourself the primary caregiver? Shared caregiver?
- 2) What type of business did you create?
 - a. How many years has this business been running?
 - b. Tell me about the business' inception
 - c. How long had you been thinking about this business idea?
 - d. Do you consider yourself an "entrepreneur?"
 - i. Why or why not?
- 3) Were you employed before or after motherhood?
 - a. What was your profession?
 - b. What prompted you to leave --- ?
- 4) What motivated you to start a business rather than join an established organization or employer?
 - a. Was this a longtime dream?
 - b. Are you happy/happier?
- 5) Was/how was motherhood a factor in your decision?
- 6) How does motherhood factor into your business currently?
 - a. How do you separate motherhood from the business?
 - b. Do you identify with "mom guilt"
- 7) What are your current motivations to continue to run your business?
 - a. Have these motivations changed from the initial inception
- 8) How have your motivations changed during the current worldwide pandemic?
 - a. How has the current pandemic affected your ability, desire, energy to run an independent business venture while being a mother?
- 9) How does the internet and community factor into your motivation?
- 10) Would you be doing this if you were not a mother?

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Appendix F

Debriefing statement

Thank you for your participation in the Mompreneur Motivations study conducted by Lauren Ogren, MA. Your participation will be helpful in determining the motivations of US based mompreneurs. This study has been conducted to better understand and interpret the specific motivations of mothers to begin a business after childhood, through a semi-structured interview process. This study will continue the work of previous mompreneurial studies conducted, and offer an interpretation on US based mompreneurs, during a worldwide pandemic.

Your participation is voluntary, and all interview transcripts and recordings will be held in a double password protected MicroSoft One cloud storage system. You may request a copy of the final dissertation after September 1, 2021.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Lauren Ogren, MA at:

LaurenOgrenMFT@gmail.com